

**THE
GRAND
MANNER**

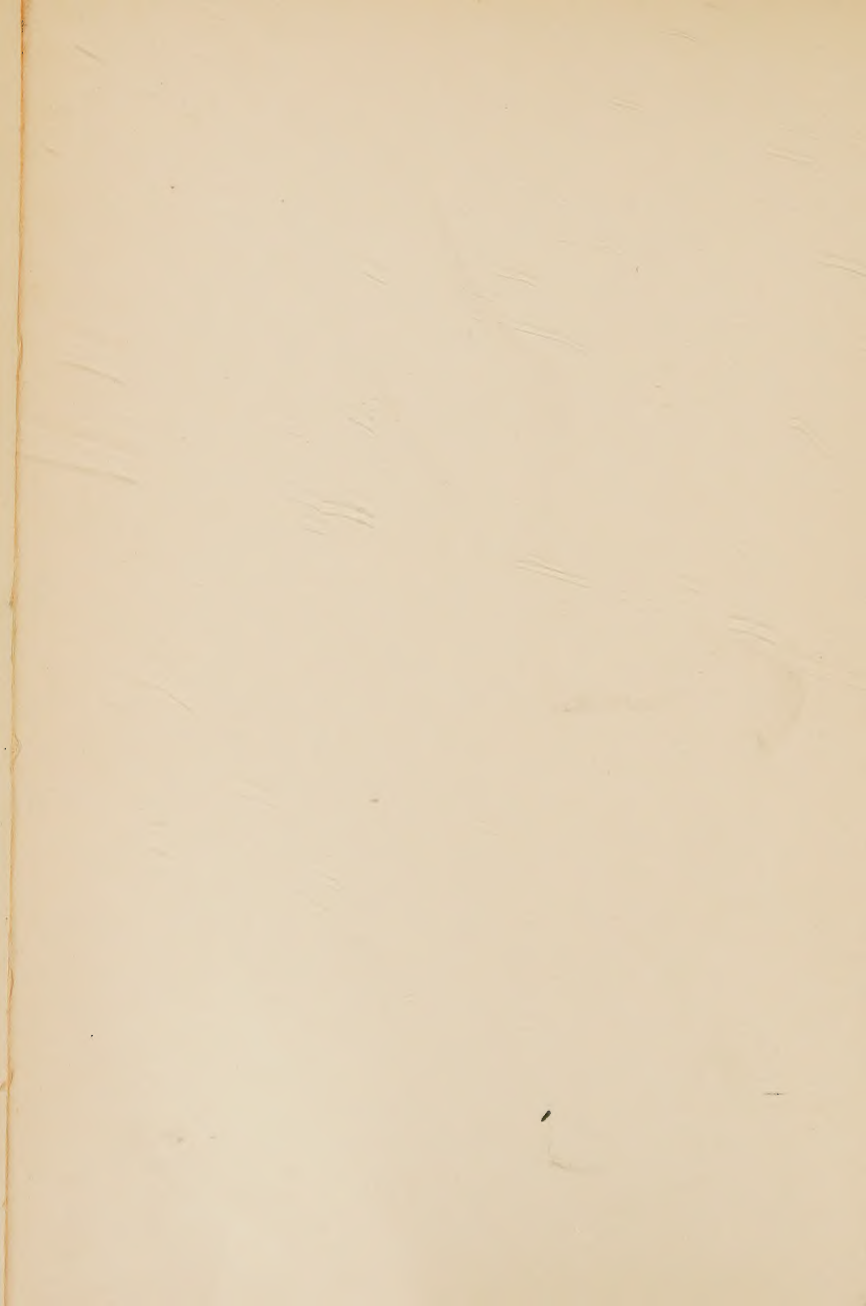


To Mamma


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THE GRAND MANNER



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THE GRAND MANNER

**BY
LOUIS
KRONENBERGER**



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To
MY MOTHER AND FATHER

NOTE

"How old are the Holnesburgers nobody knows. As far back as 978 they were ruling in Hedenstrom. Then it was a small state in the northeast of Europe and Francis I was king. But even earlier Holnesburger chieftains did battle with barbarians in German forests, and with Magyars and Tartars from Transylvania and the South. Warriors of Christ and servants of the Pope, the Holnesburgers managed to subdue their enemies and capture the stronghold of Wesa. Here, with varying fortunes, they ruled for nine hundred years.

During the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a succession of rulers, from Francis II to Julius III, made Hedenstrom a powerful nation. These men carried its boundaries to east and west, to north and south. Then slowly the tide receded, and by 1517 Hedenstrom had shrunk to its original size. Thereafter, though often at war, it neither grew appreciably nor shrank; and in modern times it had the character of a small sovereign state, comparatively impotent and seldom worth fighting over. . . ."

Blunden: A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF EUROPE.

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CHAPTER ONE

ALEX

EVERY one remembers the portrait of Alexander VII: a short, thick-set figure in greenish-yellow satin stands hugging a chair, while above and below him stretch tall distances of empty space. Every one remembers the flattened figure against its elongated background. For once Claude de Noyonville, a barbarous painter, managed to catch the style of a human being, and to imprint him unforgettably on the wandering mind.

Though a few, seeking unique and forgotten personalities of history, have rediscovered him for themselves, most of us remember nothing more of Alexander than the portrait. It is well to remember also that he was the father of Rudolph IV, the subject of this narrative; and

because one cannot even begin to grasp Rudolph without taking his father into account, it is necessary to look back upon him, stopping first to examine where we may find it, Noyonville's portrait. Having looked more carefully than usual, we can pass on.

Alexander has been called by various historians benevolent and well-meaning; by others harmless; by still others foresighted; and by his latest acid biographer, moronic. The truth is in none of these verdicts. The truth is that Alexander was unforgivably treacherous, incapable of standing by his class, his traditions, or the son who succeeded him. His treachery to his own house is almost without parallel in the history of Europe, for what he did was done without good reason: he abandoned rule for reign, not out of principle or fear, but out of vanity. When he came to the throne, he could command his ministers; when he left it, he could scarcely petition them. "Alexander VII," says Dahlbruck, "was a man of foresight, or at the worst, an opportunist. He drew the right conclusions from the storming of the

Bastille and the Reign of Terror. He gave his people the rights they would have taken. He was quick to see that the scepter had become, with time, a speaker's gavel." This attitude toward Alexander is not uncommon; but it is none the less absurd. The situation in Hedenstrom was nothing like the situation in France, and a French Revolution was as little likely to come there as the returning Messiah. Hedenstrom was a small country with rich farmlands and mineral resources, whose peasantry was better fed than even the Swiss peasantry, whose populace adored its tradition and could think of nothing with greater pride and pleasure than its long line of indisputably kingly kings. There was no poverty, no hunger, no dissatisfaction in the Hedenstrom to which Alexander came as ruler; and living its life peaceably in southern valleys and northern plains, it neither took any interest nor found any significance in the rumbling of the tumbrels toward the Place de l'Étoile and the rolling of bloody heads into the guillotine baskets. So long as he was a

reasonable monarch, Alexander had nothing to fear from his subjects in either his own lifetime or that of his son.

Neither was there anything praiseworthy in the steps he took to emasculate royal power, for it was not on grounds of principle that Alexander exchanged a *dixi* for a *viva voce*. Alexander wrote prolifically, yet in not one of his letters can you discover any appreciation of liberal theories. The right of the governed to have full voice in their government was a matter on which he never speculated. There was one, and only one reason why liberal monarchy ever came to Hedenstrom: Alexander's vanity.

Only a few actors and a few children have ever succeeded in being quite so vain as Alexander was. He not only believed liars who praised him, but he distorted the truth until it managed to pay him a compliment. Inheriting from his father, Alexander VI, a short, heavy physique, a small head, a smaller brain, and pale yellowish eyes, his appearance was not winning; and it was impossible to think of him without indulging in fantastic comparisons.

Yet at nineteen he attempted an earring, and at sixty-six he wore lemon-yellow silk stockings. Sometimes he wormed out of women the embarrassed admission that he was handsome. "Do you think I look like a king?" he asked a lady once, and she replied gravely that she thought all kings thereafter would have to look like him. He sent her gifts as long as she lived. The incontrovertible facts of his mirror; the pointed inferences of Dumart, the one man who ever dared to caricature him; the inescapable meaning of the only man he ever caught openly laughing at him from a corner, he succeeded in ignoring and even forgetting. Down deep, perhaps, he had some glimmering, possibly some genuine understanding, of the truth. For in order to make people like him, and praise him, and keep his memory green when he should be dead, he was willing to give up hereditary rights and give away hereditary lands. For a number of years he managed to be a continuous center of interest in Hedenstrom; a personal, social and political success.

His method was the same at fourteen as at

sixty. When he was a boy at school, some of his awestruck companions made him the captain of their fencing team, though he fenced like a paralytic. He was so pleased with them for rewarding what he chose to believe his prowess that he had copies of the heir-apparent's hereditary gold cross struck off, and gave one to each of his companions. When he was almost an old man, some of his bishops adopted in their churches his incredible translations of four hymns. He was so pleased with them for perceiving what he chose to believe his talent, that he gave them parcels of his private property along the Storz river. One night, during his prime, when he gave a magnificent supper at the palace in Wesa, his perspicuous courtiers and their ladies sang his praises in twenty original odes, and offered, each in turn, to serve him in any fashion he might command, from going to war to going down the long stone corridor to Alexander's private suite. He stood there among them, a man of thirty-six, his eyes streaming with tears of gratitude and hysterical vanity, and they stood around him,

like Gonerils and Regans intent on fleecing Lear. Next day they were given the enjoyment of a right which nobody but the royal family had ever possessed in the history of Hedenstrom.

And finally, in 1797, at the age of forty, when the people of Wesa had united in giving him a handsome birthday gift, and the peasantry of Hedenstrom in giving him another; when, as the gift of the people, there had been a pageant, and a parade, and prayers for him in the churches; finally, intoxicated by these tributes to his popularity, but fearful too that the exhilaration he required might begin to wear off, he published throughout his realm the news that the people were to have a voice in their government, and that he, their king, would rule no longer, but merely reign. It was a gesture begotten of the most contemptible vanity of modern times, and only a Caligula's madness can compare with it. Nor can one forget that Hans von Lichter, whose idea it originally was, received for his statecraft a decoration, a title, and a country house with

twenty acres of land. So Alexander who, had he been a normal father, would have wished to provide his son with all those advantages which he himself had lacked, bequeathed instead a nation composed simultaneously of socialists and snobs.

Twenty-one years before Rudolph was born, Alexander had chosen as his mother the daughter of his impoverished third cousin Alfonse de Stralieu, and Amalie had married the king because there was nothing else she could do. A rather handsome girl fresh from a convent, she turned into a colorless woman who early lost her looks and had a penchant for wearing so much jewelry that no one was ever sure she would not wear a nose-ring to breakfast. Her relations with her husband were eccentric. For a few years she apparently paid him the court he outrageously demanded, at first even going so far, if we are to believe the waspish Count Kuno, as to invent compliments from her ladies on Alexander's looks, his good taste, and his brilliancy at conversation. But some unknown affront which this same good taste

could not prevent him from paying her, put an end, after six years, to pretense on her part. It is likely that his habit of pursuing court beauties was responsible; Alexander's escapades were as notorious as they were ineffectual. Unfortunately they were never taken seriously enough to be recorded: the Lady Henrietta and the Lady Michaela and the Lady Louise had no hearts to pour out in their diaries; and what is primarily regarded as a joke can seldom rise to the dignity of a scandal. In any case, Alexander and Amalie became estranged. Guests at the palace did mention in their diaries their amusement at the emphatic way the Queen had of saying "Sire?" when the King addressed her; and on the suggestion of some one wittier than herself, Amalie once presented Alexander with a jester in cap and bells as a birthday present. Eventually she must have passed through stages of amusement, indifference, distaste and acute disgust to one of intense loathing for the King; and it was once open talk that when Alexander was not himself away from the palace hunting

or fishing, the Queen went to the country or the seashore to regain her health. In time this situation mended, and the intense loathing retraced itself through stages of acute disgust, distaste and indifference to one of rather melancholy amusement which stayed with Amalie till she died. The court, in any case, was a horror. The King gave a fox-hunt and interrupted the chase to show everybody a tabouret he had carved and brought along. He prepared to go to war in person against Napoleon and at the frontier had to turn his coach about because he had caught the mumps. And he would go to the House of the People which he had created with his *geste de 1797* to introduce measures personally, because it gratified him to walk down an aisle lined with kneeling representatives. He rewarded a man for suggesting that the prayer in church be altered from *pro Deo regeque* to *pro Rege Deoque*; sat to thirty-five portrait painters in sixteen years; gave special silver spoons to children who mentioned him in their prayers at night; and sent a florin to every subject who composed

an ode or hymn in his honor. This game of giving for getting was expensive; and in the course of playing it, he gave away things that had been in the family for generations. His wife alone proved a stumbling-block, and he disposed of her by publicly declaring she was unwell and privately thinking she was mad.

When Rudolph was born at Wesa on the 30th of August, 1816, Alexander was fifty-eight. He had almost despaired of having a son. Two daughters had been born to him, and two sons who died at birth. When word issued from the palace that the Queen was at last delivered safely of a male heir, wherever one went, in the streets, to church, to the musicale which the exiled Duchesse d'Islandiers gave that night for her daughter, to the taverns and houses of lust, one heard the rejoicings of a nation whose king was growing old and which functioned under the Salic law.

The next day Alexander wrote in his diary: "I have now a son to carry on my name and my work." Rudolph's entrance, the child of middle-aged parents, into the family, was

equally a cause for rejoicing there. The two daughters had never been forgiven their sex; and in many ways the children of their parents, could not be expected to get on well with them. Princess Elisabeth, the elder, was a grown girl at the time of her brother's birth: big-boned and angular, with that kind of insolent homeliness we call, in just such cases as hers, a patrician face, she could very well have called herself a school-teacher without raising doubts in other people's minds. She had, too, something of a school-teacher's dogged logic of mind. She saw through her father; like her mother, she was forced to bear more than one of his insults; and like her mother, she despised him. If she had been given the opportunity, she might have loved her brother with the indulgence a very much older sister so often shows; but neither her parents nor Rudolph himself ever gave it to her. The second sister, Katrine, was plump and good-looking and sometimes silly, more than any one else in the family like the King, and like him so desirous of flattery that she went to some pains to se-

cure it. She would stop to talk with a footman who, having learned that with Katrine it was more important to know his person than his place, would compliment her on her appearance; and his wife would receive a discarded muff or his children a discarded doll. Yet Katrine had an almost incorruptible good-naturedness. She liked everybody; she was democratic without reservations; she loved her brother, five years younger than she was, without ever being jealous of him. Rudolph, from the day when he found her talking to a footman, always despised her.

Rudolph grew up with his family centered about him, and learned very early to disregard it. His father was growing old, smoking in his garden, chatting with diplomats and bankers, passing an hour at the House of the People to lay new ideas before the fumbling bourgeoisie that was coming rapidly into power. He idolized his son; and Rudolph learned very early how it was possible to get a new pony or be taken through Wesa in the royal carriage. A little flattery, a little humility, a

little boredom were enough. The two got on well and Lady Holland remembers Alexander saying it was quite wonderful they did, "for the boy is every inch a king as I am, and yet our wills do not clash." The fine, tall boy somehow rather flattered Alexander's vanity than offended it; he seemed to mistake Rudolph for himself. Perhaps he never realized, also, for whom the crowd was really cheering when both appeared on the balcony of the palace each Gregory's Day, or in medieval fashion distributed a largesse in Wesa market-place at Christmas. Once, when Rudolph was nine, Alexander took him on a tour of Hedenstrom. They swept out of the palace gates in a closed coach, the boy sitting upright as a rod, and the father coughing. Alexander made speeches everywhere he went, and "heard appeals." He said *absolvo* countless times, sprinkled florins over the King's Highway, welcomed old soldiers familiarly, and sang with the choir in St. Olbert's Church at Minnesburg, "until," as one of his courtiers who was with him has recorded, "his voice cracked, he wheezed, and

puffing all over his pew, sat down again, tapping time with his finger as the hymn proceeded to its close. . . . Rudolph's eyes stayed fixed upon the altar."

Late that same year the Princess Elisabeth married an Englishman, the Hon. James Evelyn Stites; and a few years later Katrine married Graf von Elms, and went to live in Dresden. And Amalie ailed, and sulked, and refused to see the King, and took Rudolph on her lap and petted him, until he broke away with a glance of ice; and went to a watering-place for the cure, returning at last to take to her bed and never get up again. Gone finally was that post-Napoleonic court of which Rudolph, for a few minutes, once caught a glimpse: a court that must have said the same things many times, and in the same unimpressive way; that must have amused itself with rich foods and glamourless romances, and gone to bed literally exhausted by boredom. On the death of his wife Alexander took to wearing black, and never again would he startle those about him by sudden appearances in the

greenish-yellow satin Noyonville has preserved for us in his portrait; never again would he exasperate his whist-partners with his misplays, or his dancing-partners with his missteps. The fleeting vision Rudolph once had caught at the age of nine, with not too much sleep in his eyes to forget it, was gone. "There were about thirty present," he says in his *Jours Oublis*; "I remember bright candelabra, loud voices, music, people in greens and reds, a dowager very great in purple; and a subdued excitement, as of people very hungry for their dinner. Some one was stroking a gray cat which every one stood around to watch, and my father was bending over the score of some music, while two or three gentlemen awaited his opinion of it." That was all he saw, but it will suffice for us. "Some one was stroking a gray cat which every one stood around to watch!" One remembers Strachey's description of an evening at the court of Frederick the Great: "But a moment later it was supper-time; and the night ended in the oval dining-room, amid laughter and champagne, the

ejaculations of La Mettrie, the epigrams of Maupertuis, the sarcasms of Frederick, and the devastating coruscations of Voltaire."

A few more years Alexander lingered on, passing his time not very differently from an old peasant who no longer can work in the fields; and occasionally making sorties to parliament and the market-place. He forgot Rudolph; he forgot Amalie; he forgot everything except those days when he was the pivot of his world. But Rudolph was happy eating cherries with his tutor in the garden, or riding to hounds in a new hunting-suit. His tutor, a young German named Erich von Roettigen, was a young man with a misleadingly pale and ascetic face and slender hands, who knew all the languages of Europe to a nicety. He first captivated Rudolph because he owned a marvelous repeater watch, and later because he treated the boy with deference and let him run wild; and Rudolph captivated the tutor. His education was only partly satisfactory. He learned Portuguese perfectly and English abominably, so that in later years he could

charm the Portuguese minister, probably the least important diplomat at court, whereas he unwittingly insulted the British, easily the most important. He learned very securely that the earth is almost round, that we get light from the sun by day and from the moon by night, that Goethe is a great writer, that Rome is responsible for most of modern jurisprudence, and that algebra was invented by the Moors. Roettigen also taught Rudolph to fence, fight, ride, dance, sing; and in all these sports and accomplishments the slender young prince made fitting strides. Roettigen and Rudolph were together a great deal, for Rudolph never played with the usual batch of royal cousins. There was once a minister's daughter who came to the palace prepared to dance a minuet with the heir-apparent; but when she arrived, Roettigen sent down word that the prince was tired, and his guest, after being shown the royal gardens, returned home. There was also once a commoner's son who came with special permission to thank Rudolph for a schoolhouse which had been built

in his name; he, too, was shown the royal gardens and returned home, but not until he had been rebuked by a gardener for stealing a yellow rose.

In 1833 the services of Erich von Roettigen were no longer required, and he rode off in a coach with the cross of St. Eulalie on his breast. Rudolph was almost seventeen, and idolized; Alexander was seventy-six, and all but forgotten. Every one went on with his work, wondering when Alex, as they called him in the taverns, would take the viaticum. Rudolph was to go for three years to the Royal Military Academy and then take a year of travel; but all these plans fell apart one morning when two doctors, after thirty-four hours of almost sleepless attendance upon the King, announced that Alexander, crying at the last for his new umbrella, was dead.

Rudolph took the news without saying a word. He had been sitting up all night, and he at once retired to his room. Seven hours later he reappeared, dressed in deep black, and looking much refreshed. He stood five

ten in his stockinged feet, with keen eyes of deep brown, and thick brown hair, a tall young monarch waiting to be crowned.

The coronation was speedy and simple. The oldest of Alexander's first cousins laid a crown of gold and gems on Rudolph's head, an archbishop said the Latin for "I name you King of Hedenstrom by the grace of God and His saints and His ministers," an almost muted choir solemnly sang the Coronation Hymn, and the galleries restrained their impulse to cheer. Presently, heavy with his appurtenances, Rudolph rose, bowed almost imperceptibly, blessed his people, and while all Wesa knelt with streaming eyes, walked out of the Great Door of the Cathedral, and stepped lightly into his carriage.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REIGN OF PLEASURE

By 1834 the Europe of the eighteenth century was gone: France had passed through her second revolution and England had enacted her great Reform Bill. Rudolph succeeded to the throne of the most politically liberal country, except for Switzerland, in Europe; and liberalism was expected of him, for his father had set the example. At first the young king was not interested in politics; though his secret aims were boundless, his outward spirits were temporarily subdued, and to be the arbiter of fashions seemed to him an easier task, for the time being, than to be the conqueror of states. The first thing he did which attracted attention was so barbarous that it became a huge *succès de fiasco*: he ordered Mass for five o'clock in the morning. The Court, which had rebelled against getting up for Mass at ten, fell in love with going to bed, after Mass,

at six; and when the King, wise enough to know that his Court could not stay up all night with nothing to do, sponsored roulette and vingt-et-un at the palace, with anchovies and claret-cup at half-past two, every one fell in love with him. Himself still in mourning, Rudolph did not play; but he loved to pause at the roulette table and, smiling at a young baroness, throw a florin for her on his lifelong number 9.

He lived in the palace and conducted his court alone. He had, as is customary with kings, no father; he had no mother, no wife, no sweetheart, no mistress; and two sisters who popped in and out of the palace very mindful of keeping their distance. From the first he was so irritated by Elisabeth's two children that he would send them Christmas presents he knew they would abhor, and invite them to Wesa, along with their countryfied English father, at the hottest season of the year. He had no need of them. From the morning when he first addressed the House of Nobles and the House of the People, he was a self-assured, urbane young man of whom one

perforce took notice. "We shall be delighted," Rudolph had said in closing, "to confer with you at all times; to seek and examine your advice; and we shall try to serve our people as our forefathers have served them, and since you also serve our people, we should find ourselves always in harmony." Then, with finality: "We thank you, nobles, gentlemen, all." He got down from the dais, and as everybody shot out of their seats, made straight for the door. His hearers had found him distinctly impressive, his manner lending a curious weight to his words.

Not everybody saw, at once, that the King was no chip off the old block. Only a few saw behind those stilted sentences a purpose it would not be easy to tame, or realized that some men are born to be exactly what they are. No one went out to discover the best way to deal with a man who obviously regarded himself as above dealings—no one attempted to test Rudolph out on the rock of sympathy, or the rock of flattery, or the rock of reason. From the first, men tried to enact all kinds of preventive measures without even trying to

find out what it was they aimed at preventing. If the King said he preferred hock to sauterne, every one preferred hock to sauterne; but if he wrote an official despatch to the Cabinet on the subject of war with Austria, the Cabinet would meet and conclude that "*il lui faut cultiver son jardin, non parler des choses comme la guerre.*"

So Rudolph fell back upon his "little kingdom," the world whose boundaries were the walls of his palace, the world of fashion and display. Alexander had left Hedenstrom almost without a court, leaving society in the hands of the bourgeoisie; and Rudolph reclaimed it. He made it truly magnificent, the smartest, the liveliest capital in Europe, where, as we have it from Lady Alice Waring, "a galaxy of beautiful women and brilliant men came together for ice-carnivals and musicales, and the young King took his seat at supper as no one had taken it since Louis XIV, or perhaps Petronius, or perhaps Jove himself." Every one flocked to Wesa, and for four years Rudolph had the world at his feet.

The world of society was not, of course, what

it had been before Napoleon's day. We must remember that the palmiest days of the salon were gone, that Brummell was dying at Caen, that France under Louis Philippe was a country cousin, that Victoria was still learning table-manners under the instructions of Lehzen. Rudolph was determined to remold a Jockey-Club civilization into something like Versailles before the Revolution, but he had no intention of paving the way, in Hedenstrom, for either a Reign of Terror or a Napoleon. He had to rule society on his private income, which was barely enough to keep a king in society. His one extravagance was his chef, who Metternich said poached an egg as Madame de Sévigné wrote letters: "*incroyablement.*" The chef ostracized potatoes, pork, beer and cabbage; he introduced brocoli to the world, added lemon to egg sauce and called it hollandaise, invented coupe de fruits glacés Hedenstrom, and preceded the self-styled inventor of chateaubriand by more than twenty years. Thus Rudolph entertained all the eligible epicures in the world. To make

his court truly illustrious, he needed also the belles and the wits. The belles adored his face, were grateful to him for permitting the valse to be danced at his court when it was forbidden at all others, and thought highly of a household that never went to bed until children got up for school, and never got up until children went to bed. The belles stayed, were courted there, affianced there, married there, and as married women, took paramours there from the foremost wits and statesmen of the day. It was not hard to hold the wits. Half of them were epicures of food; the other, of beauty. It was at Wesa during the winter of 1836 that Orvieu said for posterity, "A woman prefers her mirror to her portrait," and that Pollok made his most brilliant and unprintable mot, something lost to us, through a lamentable prudery, forever.

Rudolph's sisters were kept noticeably in the background. The one would have loved to come from Dresden, and the other from Warwickshire, to grace their brother's dinner-table and preside over his festivities, but he made it plain that such courtesies were unwelcome.

On occasion the ageing, highborn Duchesse d'Islandiers, so long a resident of Wesa and once the intimate of Amalie, would preside as hostess in the palace; and there was sometimes to be seen there an old lady dressed completely in gray, with a coronet in her silver-gray hair—that cousin of Alexander's who in her prime managed to scandalize half the courts of Europe with her indiscretions, and now beamed with angelic innocence upon the frivolities of Rudolph's court: the Herzogin Paulina of Hesse-Darmstadt. With so many girls ready to throw themselves at the King's head, it was necessary that he sometimes present, at the palace, the appearance of domesticity. This grandest of courts during the '30's left no breath of scandal upon the youthful king. Tall, young, handsome, he stood, always a focal point, in the midst of laughing belles and acidulous wits and ogling roués, insisting, whatever their private morals, upon their respect for decorum in public. They could valse; they could flirt; they could stay up all night emptying his cellars of priceless

Rudesheimer and claret and Château Yquem and Lachrymæ Christi, squandering their florins at the rosewood roulette table where Talleyrand once acted as croupier and Musset composed, *ex tempore*, an unrecorded *Ballade du rouge et du noir*; they could fill their conversation with such double meanings as only Pollok and Fourblin were capable of filling it. But some one reeling tipsily across the ball-room, or flinging his wine-glass against the wall, bade the palace good-by; and men and women whose presence was missed from the assemblage and who had dared to improvise their own entertainment rather than accept the King's, found the necessity for improvisation a permanent one thereafter.

For four years this life continued, and only ceased when Rudolph took his celebrated "forty days' journey" late in the spring of 1838. He visited the provinces, where he contracted the habit of embracing peasant girls. This form of democracy soon grew unbridled, and was something from which he could not extricate himself for the remainder of his days.

One lady said that with him it was decidedly a case, not of *Cherchez la femme*, but of *Cherchez les femmes*; "but how proper!" she continued, "for is not the plural the prerogative of kings?"

This trip of forty days caused something of a scandal in Wesa, which for all its uninterrupted gayety, for all the King's love of life, had never had the satisfaction of naming him in a *liaison*. But it was no long-lived manner of amusing the Court. Summer was drawing near and the King was still away; the cosmopolitan society Rudolph had attracted and held so long began talking once again of Paris and Vienna and the watering-places, and one by one they packed their portmanteaus and departed. Rudolph remained philandering in the country all through May, making speeches for diversion, dedicating statues for effect. He visited a few daughters of old country-houses, showing their mothers the polished courtesy of the capital, then, it was whispered, stole round to the back door, and late at night got into his coach and rattled off down ancient roads. Once, incognito, he gambled in a

tavern near Sporck, losing sixty florins, and once he visited a school and smiled at a timid child who one day would oppose his right to hold a throne. June came at last and the roads grew dusty; only the road back to Wesa seemed cool, and on the 12th of the month he returned to his capital to find it deserted.

Then and there he must have said, "I will marry"; then and there he did. He cast about for an eligible wife. The princesses of his own country were close relations and could not be considered, for the houses of both Holnesburger and Brulich were weakened by inbreeding. Over in Belgium was the Princess Isabelle, over in Austria the Princess Charlotte, and down in Italy, Princess Dorothea of Savoy. Belle was too old, as he remembered her; Charlotte too ugly. Dorothea he had never seen. She came of an old house, very decadent but even more aristocratic, and had not some poet, happy in Tuscan fields until he saw her, blown out his brains for love of her beauty? Rudolph got into a superb new coach and drove south and west to the court of the King of Savoy.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIVE-FOOT WEDDING CAKE

I

IN his inimitable memoirs Storloni tells how Rudolph, after arriving at court, was put off two days without seeing Dorothea, and met her at last on the evening of a great ball the King and Queen gave in his honor. She wore white, and her hazel eyes glowed warmly beneath her narrow coronet. Rudolph was presented; they danced formal dances; he took her in to supper. From the first, says Storloni, the young King was so moved by her girlishness and so stunned by her beauty, that while the strings were still playing impeccable Mozart minuets, he had made up his mind. "As he bade the princess good night, and she turned to cross the great ballroom and go through the arched doorway, his eyes did not leave her for a second. And

when he looked up at last, and smiled into the face of the Contessa della Formosa, those eyes were young and wistful."

There followed miraculous days, in which fountains and music, champagne and the brightest flowers of the garden, had a full part. The portrait which Giacomo has painted of Dorothea at nineteen, and which should have been painted by Greuze or Fragonard, does not leave us wondering very long. Her hair was light brown to match her hazel eyes; her skin was a fragile pink; her hands slim, her feet captivatingly small. One might say she was every inch a princess, but that conveys haughtiness, and haughtiness is not in the picture. In Giacomo's painting Dorothea is, first and last, a girl. She is everything that we associate, in romantic moods, with girlhood; some one born with high spirits and an irresistible innocent charm, for happiness and love. That is what Rudolph must have seen, for the princess in Dorothea he would have taken for granted.

And that must have enchanted him. He had held court for men and women older than

himself—for men who spent their days in the saddle and their nights over great dinners and suppers, men born to judge the quality of a Bordeaux or a cointreau, to regard lackeys as posts, to rise yawning from a game of *hasard* at which they had lost the family plate, and to dance attendance upon painted and powdered women who laughed behind their fans;—for women tired at thirty, tired of balls, of men, of compliments, of sunlight, who rose with the moon to play a hackneyed game with young officers and diplomats. And for all his poise, for all his social adequacy, for all his lightly woven way among the pleasures of the sophisticated, Rudolph had been hoping, perhaps, for a world that would be all May. He had dreamed of that world when he was young, when the village maids were gracious, as his coach-wheels sank into the muddy roads of his provinces. Here at last in Savoy, at the oldest surviving court in the world, he found a beautiful young girl fresh from a convent who got up with the dawn.

Dorothea had been reared according to the

requirements of her day and station, which were strict ones. She must know how to be a queen, but not a woman; she must presume no knowledge of men or love, for the day would come when her father the King would choose a husband for her. She must embroider and paint, sing and play the pianoforte, speak all the languages of Europe as beautifully as she spoke her own; and she must carry herself, and wear her gowns, like the great ladies about her and her ancestresses in their full-length portraits in oils. Of her father's notoriously wicked and dissolute court she had no idea; but she had read a little, she had heard a little, she had imagined a great deal; and princess or no princess, she played little pranks upon her brother, or churned butter when no one was looking, or got up very early on summer mornings when they were at Lago di Como and slipped into the bright blue water to bathe.

Then came the ball for the Duke of Milan—horrible old man; and she waited and wondered. But at last the Duke bowed farewell over her, and got into his coach, and her father

smiled slowly and said, "Not yet, my child." Then this new visitor—"Rudolph of Hedenstrom will be here in two days' time," her mother told her; and another magnificent ball, with this time a coronet for her hair. For two days she waited in the palace before she could meet the young King who had come to visit her parents; then the doors parted and Rudolph was brought to meet her before they went down to a State dinner. How young he was, how handsome, how flawlessly dressed, how miraculously poised! At dinner they spoke of little things: the ponies they had had as children ("Had yours a little white spot on its neck?" Rudolph asked); the pranks they played on governess and tutor; the valse, which she had never seen danced; peasant costumes and army uniforms; and the way to train parrots to talk.

As they sat talking, Rudolph must have forgotten he was a king. He did not forget it often; he had never forgotten it in Wesa. But here he shed his dignity, his contempts, his responsibilities, his worldliness, till, as Storloni

says, he looked for the first time like a boy; and our indefatigable diarist noticed also how, during an interval between polite conversation, the Queen looked at the King, and the King very cautiously nodded.

The days passed divinely, and on the tenth day Rudolph spoke. Would the King do him the great honor of the Princess Dorothea's hand? "I will make her happy," he said simply; and went on to set forth the material advantages of Hedenstrom. At length: It did the King great honor, always supposing the Princess Dorothea found it pleasing, to give his daughter's hand in marriage to the King of Hedenstrom.

That night both Rudolph and Dorothea began diaries. The habits of a responsible and busy life restrained Rudolph from saying more than "God willing, I shall always love her and make her happy"; but scattered among the decorous, schoolgirl lines which Dorothea wrote concerning Rudolph, lay ecstatic phrases born of expectant and innocent love. "I have dreamt about my dear Rudolph every night

since he arrived," she naïvely confesses along with a questioning whether her bedroom at Wesa would be as pretty as that in Savoy. The entries are cut short: for while Dorothea sat writing, the Queen entered her daughter's apartment to say that their cousin the Cardinal would come to the palace in the morning to give Dorothea and Rudolph his blessing.

2

The marriage of Rudolph IV of Hedenstrom and Princess Dorothea of Savoy took place on the 22nd of January, 1839. Nothing like it for splendor had taken place since before the days of Napoleon. The one account of it which survives is in a letter the Duchess of Richmond wrote to her invalid sister at Bath. After expressing admiration for Rudolph, "whom I found infinitely charming, and of a marked poise and grace," she goes on to describe the nuptials: "The Cathedral, my dear Harriett, was crowded with personages, the King and Queen of Savoy, the King and Queen

of Naples, Louis of France, the King and Queen of Belgium, Lord Wellington, Metternich, the King of Bavaria—I cannot attempt to name them all. The gentlemen wore full uniform, the ladies their richest attire, and the Cardinal Utare was in bright red. The choir sang with lustiest magnificence. . . . Afterwards we went to the state ball at the Palace, where there was champagne wine running in rivers, and a wedding cake five feet high. The King and Queen sat formally on their thrones, and the music played on a raised pavilion.”

In the midst of the revelry Rudolph and Dorothea took formal leave of her parents. They drove to a country-house of the King’s some twenty miles distant, where they were to begin their honeymoon. For an hour, as they drove along, Dorothea wept on her husband’s shoulder. She was leaving the palace in which she had grown up, with its secret nooks and her own beloved apartments; she was leaving everything behind her, her mother, her father, her younger brother, her maids of honor . . . her little spaniel Lippo the only link between

the old life and the new. Crying quietly with her husband's arm around her, and his soft kisses upon her mouth and cheek, she must have suddenly perceived, and dreaded, the meaning of the new life lying before her. Her mouth, that, as Storloni said, summed up all the hopes and dreams of a young girl in love with life, must have quivered slightly. For—and all at once she knew it—though a princess leads a life more sheltered than a nun's, a queen leads a life as public as a circus freak's. She was both glad and afraid of the darkness. She bit her lip finally, and stopped crying. On and on rushed the coach, past fields she was leaving forever, to their private destination. And there they were; and Rudolph put his hand in hers and led her with a strange bashfulness into her bedroom, and kissed her, and said good night.

England later, and moonlight coming down the Rhine. Cologne. Paris. Vienna. Finally, on the 27th of March they entered Wesa, and proceeded in an open carriage down the wide

Koenigstrasse, flowers strewn in their path, and from high in the air the great golden bells of the Cathedral pealing welcome. Rudolph sat bowing, gracious but formal; Dorothea smiled. As the King, returning from his holiday, looked down the familiar avenue, his face appeared to grow a trifle stern. He had been informed there might be trouble in Hedenstrom. Some fanatic was clamoring for more rights, more liberties. "Down with Kings!" young Brünstock had shouted in the best French-Republican style. Some one overheard him and reported him to the police, who promptly clapped him into jail. At once the fanatic became a martyr to his followers; at once his followers grew more numerous, their exhortations more unbridled. "Rache für Brünstock!" they shouted. Rudolph, traveling homeward, did not like the sound of the thing.

His fears were not without substance, for something happened even as he and Dorothea were driving to the palace. One man among the harmless and enthusiastic crowd of wel-

comers had a pistol in his pocket. He could not forget that his father had died on the guillotine or that his mother had died, in subsequent poverty, of consumption; and when the carriage passed in front of him, he took aim and fired.

He missed Dorothea by inches. Rooted in terror she never moved, so that her conduct befitted a queen. Rudolph turned to her, horribly pale, and took her hand. The cheering crowd turned its attention upon a now spent, mumbling youth, and the carriage proceeded into the distance, came at length to the great square before the palace, and turned in through high grilled gates. When it came in sight of the steps of her future home, Dorothea fainted.

3

The Court was now quieter than it had been, less distinguished in numbers for beauty and wit, and given to fewer ceremonial functions. But with Dorothea to grace it, and a new and boyish Rudolph, it still had charm for the

world-weary who had dallied too long in Paris and Vienna ever again to be quite happy. The Queen herself had changed a little. Dorothea was no longer the innocent princess of an Italian court. Two months at her husband's side in smart European capitals where she received the homage of a reigning queen had brought out her inherent womanliness. She became no silly Marie Antoinette playing at life in the Petit Trianon. Young though she was, she began to command the respect, as she always won the love, of the great minds and souls of her time. In spite of a bad education and an immutable point of view which had been thrust upon her, she had uncommon intuitions. The girl had been prankish and the queen was meditative; but both moods express the same temperament—a strong interest in life. Dorothea loved life in the fresh, natural way of those who are too much interested in neither humanity nor themselves.

There survives a letter written to Lamartine by Madame Récamier, who left her convent for a short visit to Wesa where, through some

ironic circumstance, she was bidden to a ball at the palace. She describes it; then she speaks of those who gave it.

“Dorothea seems to me the loveliest and daintiest queen who has sat upon a European throne in our generation. Her frank, mirthful eyes win your heart, and there is something so young and beautiful about her throat that it almost moves one to tears. But she seems more than a figurine. Though hesitant, she talks very well, is witty at the expense of the grotesque old Court rogues whom she nicknames and describes in various preposterous situations with capital humor. Of course she could do all this without for a moment understanding what it means to be a Queen. But Dorothea understands, I am tempted to believe. I think she guesses that the day of crowns is passing, and perhaps she sympathizes with her own opponents. But no! It is simply that she is generous-hearted. She told some one that she will not just dedicate statues and bow from balconies, but whether she will do more, Time must tell. At any rate she should prove useful

to the King. He is handsome and has charm, but I do not think, from what I have seen and heard, that I would like him. A delightful host, but, I imagine, none too good a king. So much a born king he couldn't take orders if he tried, or reason matters much better. *L'état, c'est moi*—that sort of thing in the wrong century.

"I must add that they are profoundly in love with each other. How do I know, you ask? No one could fail to."

No one could fail to; so openly, so urgently they loved one another with all that was best in their natures. Rudolph, with consideration and reverence, with gallantry and kindness; Dorothea with an instinct for sacrifice, with tenderness, with purity, with pain; and beyond all that, they loved each other breathlessly, with passion. As for what else a woman saw who could perceive human nature beneath human moods, it gives us pause.

"*L'état, c'est moi*—that sort of thing," said Madame Récamier, "in the wrong century."

Perhaps every life calls for clarification at one

point that thereafter it may speak for itself. It is not the same thing to look at Rudolph turned twenty-three as we look at him to-day. What we remember to-day is the illogical residuum which History leaves: the brilliant court of his youth, the angry mob he faced once and left cheering him hoarse, the great lady whose name Time has linked with his. But what indeed are these things in the light of History?—moments, incidents, gestures; anecdotes, as Brummell's pea and Cromwell's moles are anecdotes. What we forget to-day is the Holnesburger blood, is his father's horrible example, his own spoiled upbringing, the flattery, the curtsyng, the adoration shown him in his first years as king. All this happened before he was twenty-three; while on the other hand, he had not tested his sword against any one worthy of his steel. He had fought no battles with the world outside, struggled for no power against a doughty House of the People, thrust no commands upon the unwilling, put the fear of God into no enemy on the battlefield. He had been cautious and he

had been successful, continuously successful. To be continuously successful is to count upon continuous success, to doubt the reality of failure, to doubt the necessity of failure, to doubt even the possibility.

To his own lasting harm, the King had everything that is given in the world. Madame Récamier looked at him once: did she nudge, perhaps, the Muse of History?

4

The old Duchess Paulina came to the palace for a visit and at dinner, one night, died quietly of heart disease. There followed a funeral of great ceremony and a short period of respectful mourning. But soon the palace was lighted up again for a German prince who came and went, and later Rudolph and Dorothea gave a water-carnival in honor of his cousin, Princess Ermentrude of Saxony, who was to marry Otto of Koenigen. On warm summer afternoons the young King and Queen rode down the river in the royal barge; on warm summer

evenings they sat alone in the garden. The days ran on: politics, finance, people of state were forgotten. Rudolph, who loved state occasions, who rode ceremonially to hounds, who delighted to gather in one room the seven greatest wits and the seven greatest belles of Europe, forgot all this now, his life given over to Dorothea, who, as summer wore on into russet and crystalline autumn, was nearing her time.

Those days were the best and most beautiful. The cold hand of History cannot touch them, no judgment of royalty can affect them. For Rudolph and Dorothea were then husband and wife and nothing more; and the wife was with child. When he came to have coffee with her by the fire in her old-fashioned sitting-room, her ladies-in-waiting would respectfully rise and go. They would sit there, he and she, saying little, but he would look at her, and as he has brusquely recorded in his diary, something gushed up in him, and the longing to take her in his arms and hold her fast, to murmur "*Ich liebe dich*" would be too strong for resistance. She was bearing him an heir—a King, they

hoped, for Hedenstrom—but most of all she was bearing him a child. For that he worshiped her, and for that she was glad; but each was happiest because he was with the other, and the child, at moments, was forgotten. Or they would sit together at night and Dorothea would sew, or read to him; till boyishly he would take the *Buch der Lieder* out of her hands, and quote the tritest and sweetest of the verses:

*Du bist wie eine Blume,
So hold, so schön, so rein.*

In the morning he rose early, and went to see her. He went out on horseback, then returned and took her into the country in an open carriage, stopping it to get down and pick some flowers for her hair. All this made life very simple and full for her, as she had dreamed of it in the garden at Savoy. It was nicer this way, nicer than engaging the visiting wits in conversation, or reading the books the old philosopher sent her from Vienna; and she could look forward to seeing her mother again,

who was coming for Dorothea's confinement, along with the impish young prince, who was having his last fling at childhood, before being booted and collared for the Army.

October was uncommonly beautiful; then frosts came, and on the seventh of November the fearful *Donnerwetter* of '39, when heavy trees were blasted in the Elbeswald. For six days storm raged—lightning and thunder, rain, hail, snow. To the piercing halloo of the hail the Queen of Savoy, in the first of three lumbering coaches, passed through the old gates of the palace on the eleventh; in the dead quiet following a blizzard, the doctors from Vienna hurried indoors on the thirteenth, to join the Court physician, who had been living at the palace for a week. Rudolph, excited beneath his apparent calm, confined to the palace while the storm raged for days, waited with the unruffled Queen of Savoy, the dowager Duchesse d'Islandiers, the physicians, the traditional midwife, and the soft, flushed Dorothea, hour by hour. Her time, as they had reckoned it, was past. Still they waited. On the fourteenth

and fifteenth of November the storm subsided, revealing transfigured skies of pure bright blue above the sparkling levels of snow. On the night of the fifteenth the stars perished behind clouds, and the winds caught up an unearthly wail. In the morning, with thick snow falling once more, Dorothea took at last to her bed.

Footsteps in and out of rooms—voices, orders, the grave countenance of her mother, the drawn face of the Duchesse d'Islandiers; and Rudolph, sitting in his study over documents, with Count Yser bending over him, explaining, clarifying, endlessly repeating—"May I suggest to Your Majesty—"; "May I venture to show Your Majesty how—" The day passed in snow, and night came down over the palace. Now the doctors were closeted in Dorothea's room. Rudolph sat with the brandy beside him, the whole State dining-room brilliant with candelabra and flambeaux. The big clock ticked on, boomed, ticked on. Nine o'clock. He rose and began the ascent of the heavily carpeted stairway. Almost at once he saw Dr. Waldmeyer bowing, "I am pleased to inform

Your Majesty that the Queen is delivered of a son, and resting nicely." Ah, it was over! Rudolph's color came back, and he stood firm on his feet.

Yes, he might go for a moment into the Queen's bedroom, and then he might go and see the baby. He went and kissed Dorothea's forehead and a moment later was holding a good-sized infant in his arms, looking down at it stupidly, wonderingly, a slight smile passing over his face.

He bade the doctors and his mother-in-law good night and went to his bedroom exhausted by the taut excitement of the day. For a moment he paused at the window, and looking out saw that a bright moon was at last shining in the heavens. He sat down at his writing-table, recording all the events of the day methodically in his journal. Waving his valet aside, he undressed, blew out the candles, and went to bed.

They woke him in the middle of the night, standing with flambeaux held before their faces, to bid him come quickly, very quickly, to the bedside of the Queen. A setback—hemor-

rhages and internal bleeding. Dorothea was sinking fast and the wan, hovering doctors could do nothing. He flew across the corridor and passed into the half-lighted bed-chamber. Then, driving a smile across his face, cool, steady, erect, he approached his wife, knelt beside her, taking her hand in his, kissed her, smoothed her forehead; and very dry-eyed, looking down upon the girl he loved, he saw her eyelids flutter and her tongue move in her mouth, till both grew still, and the whole room grew still, and the whole palace, lighted up as if for a State ball, grew cold and still and awful.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLACK FLAGS

I

ON cold winter afternoons the townspeople of Wesa, glancing through the grilled gates behind the palace, would catch sight of a tall man in a greatcoat walking with brusque strides up and down the garden. Frequently there was some one at his side, for as he walked, he would peremptorily demand the presence there of anybody from a lackey to a lord. His eyes were small and hard, his lips clasped tight upon each other, his words were clipped, and his face was a cold mask it seemed impertinent to look upon. To those who passed and re-passed the gate on errands of their own, it appeared that he walked for hours, always brusquely, always without a glance to right or left. The sun sank and the moving form became a moving shadow; then with terrifying

suddenness, the shadow wheeled around and marched into the palace.

By night the candles in the King's bed-chamber burned on and on, though the palace was otherwise in darkness and the streets deserted. At length the bedroom turned dark, only to glow with lights again, while the shadow of a man drinking brandy at a table fell against the wall. The table was littered with papers. Books, crested and leather-bound, stood in piles that never fell into disorder. The candles burned low in the candlesticks until once more they were extinguished, and the silence of the high-ceilinged room flowed into the vaster silence of the palace. By then the eastern sky was tinged a milkish-white, the servants were rising from their beds and the cocks beginning to crow.

Month followed month. The King rode his horse in the morning till it panted with exhaustion, ate a sparing lunch, walked up and down the bloomless garden hour after hour, and sat pouring out tumblers of brandy until the night was almost over. He received no one

at the palace, only consenting to see people for moments while walking in the garden; he never drove out through the city, never set foot in the House of Nobles or the House of the People. In a smaller room than his own, at the other end of the corridor, his son, Prince Carl, lay sleeping near the fire. Once a day, directly after lunch, his father went to have a look at him. But they noticed how Rudolph looked rather at the crib than at its occupant, and mainly asked questions of the nurse. How was His Highness' health? What was his weight? Did he take enough nourishment? Did he have enough sleep? And then he would go out.

The heartbroken Queen of Savoy, leaning on the arm of her son, had got into her crape-hung coach while Rudolph stood gravely bowing her godspeed, and gone back to that sunny court where just a year ago a dozen fiddles were playing Mozart. She would return in the spring to see the "principino," but now she must go home. Rudolph walked grimly up the palace steps and closed the door of his room behind him. . . .

Something had suddenly snapped, snapped beyond repair. Youth had been denied, and then regained, and the world, for a time, well-lost. . . . But kings, born kings, do not die; and every terror befalling the man draws the apotheosis of kingship closer. Men are born to love, but kings to rule. There where he sat in the wavering light of midnight candles, killing the stomach's cold with tumblers of brandy, thoughts gave way to emotions, reason to bitterness, pain to hate. A born king is never weak, and though love was forfeited, the brain functioned, the will grew and grew to outrageous proportions.

But the King, resuming kingship as he had assumed it at eighteen, could find no pleasure in it. What use to cajole, direct, persuade, command those men in broadcloth and gaiters who took their seats so clumsily in the House of the People? What use to receive the *maréchals*, the diplomats, the *tragediennes*, the court-ladies, the wits? Better for him a frozen world of his own. It wasn't worth the trouble to show his power, to parade his talents, so surely

he knew they were his and so little he wanted to do with them. He felt almost *too* strong. The boy had been spoilt, the young king idolized, the young lover transported. Well, the king, resuming, would brood awhile, and hate. He would ride Ajax till its flanks dripped with sweat; he would walk up and down the garden, an impenetrable power it was useless to confront. And he would go to Mass, or pray in his private chapel, and the priests, impotent servants of a terrible Teutonic God, might solace him if they could. *If they could.*

The winter months moved slowly. It was a terrible winter when countesses and barons fled to Paris and Vienna and London, palpitating with fear of the unnaturalness of it all, only to be summoned back to Wesa that the King might order them about his garden and sneeze in their faces! That inhuman face of his, the eyes of which did not even mock, the lips of which did not even sneer! That inhuman palace, with its dead silences, where the crashing of a plate seemed to awaken one from a frozen dream. Read the scraps in the Journal

of the Baroness von Lichtenstein, read the letter the young Countess of Westseeland wrote to the young Countess of Marl. "We went yesterday to the palace hoping we might see the prince. After a long wait, we were told to go into the garden and see His Majesty. I was shocked . . . not a trace of youthfulness remains on his face. He had just dismissed some scientist from Paris who wanted to install 'gas' in the palace—peremptorily dismissed him. He did not seem to know us at once; bowed coldly and said we might walk up and down with him if we wished. We walked up and down, waiting to be addressed. He was completely silent. Said nothing about letting us see the prince. He spoke only once—to ask Otto whether he had seen Baron von Grusle using the royal box. At length he bowed, very abruptly. We were dismissed.

"As soon as possible, we are coming to Vienna. Here it is like a tomb."

Then spring came, with its humanizing odors, and something happened to engage the notice of the King.

For the past few years the so-called "advanced" party in the House had been making itself felt, gaining a stronger foothold with each new hearing. Its chief program was to abolish the surviving injustices of the *ancien régime*. First it tried to control the finances of the King's official life. It failed, but gained a sympathetic ear in the House. Then it attacked the privileges of the "King's Body-guard." This consisted of ninety army officers who, solely through custom and royal favor, received larger salaries and possessed greater privileges than their brothers. They wore, not gray, but blue and silver; when they were in Wesa, they did not sit down to officers' mess, but had their own special food; they could get any number of leaves; had pick of horses; and except in time of war, took most of their orders from the King direct, and not from their superiors. The Left Wing of the House frothed at the mouth whenever they thought of such preferment, and called it a "relic of barbarism." Their

leader, Gustav Schlitz, fought this outrage; Rudolph retorted that the King's Bodyguard was none of his business; the Army officers, emboldened, took up the cries of the "Schlitzschreiers"; and eventually Rudolph had to accept a compromise. Salaries were made uniform, all officers had to take orders from their superiors, leaves were redistributed; and only such surface distinctions as the Bodyguard uniform and the Bodyguard mess were permitted to continue.

This affair had taken place the summer before Dorothea's death, and Rudolph's resentment had been dissolved by his personal happiness. But when, the next April, a man in the House named Geiger introduced a measure removing the King's power to make grants and pensions, the young man walking sternly up and down his garden heard, and slackened his pace a little, then increased it, and walked into the palace with, however fierce a light, at least a human one, in his eye. The days of brooding and silence were over.

In Parliament matters moved rapidly. The King's frigid aloofness had not only destroyed

all sympathy with him in his bereavement, but slowly incensed, then violently outraged the feelings of the members. When Geiger rose to present his bill, he had chosen the perfect moment. Whatever he once had been, this young king who slammed doors in loyal burghers' faces, was not popular. Men's memories are short, their amour-propre is great, and there was much in what Geiger said with all the eloquence at his command. Debate the bill, yes; parliamentarians must debate; oppose it a little, yes; but in the end—

Rudolph, at his writing-table, took hold of himself, angry as he was, that the royal manner, the royal cogency, the royal grace might win the day. It shocked him that he must persuade others to allow him his unquestionable rights; but if a king must joust with commoners, let his horsemanship and his lancemanship be perfect. So, one morning, he got into his coach and drove to Parliament.

Down the red-carpeted aisle banked (still) with kneeling representatives the King took his slow way, his face unsmiling but relaxed, till

he reached the dais and calmly began to speak. He told the House that they were attacking the constitution; seeking to nullify a royal right which had never been abused, but contrariwise, had always been wielded with great discrimination and propriety; seeking to destroy what should always be scrupulously preserved, the benevolent relationship of a monarch with his people; and that finally they were showing a lack of confidence in him, Rudolph, personally, as well as of respect for the Crown. "Whatever misguided reasoning has led you to attempt this step, which deeply hurts your king and strongly offends his kingship, we must ask you now to discard. If our love and good will and strict sense of responsibility are not enough, then may the Will of God as vested in us give you pause!"

Whatever the effect of his speech might otherwise have been, the "Will of God" brought down ruin upon his head. How Geiger used those words like a hand-grenade, throwing them smoking hot all over the House! On the fourth of May his bill became a law.

Once again Rudolph walked up and down his garden. A committee from the House begged for an audience. The King received them as he walked, demanding the object of their visit. They told him that Geiger's bill had become law. Looking through the spokesman, "We will not recognize it," Rudolph said. "But Your Majesty must recognize it," the man threw out with an effort. "We will not recognize it," repeated Rudolph, not relaxing his stare. "Your Majesty has spoken," the man replied, ending the audience. But the right to issue grants and pensions had passed out of Rudolph's hands forever.

3

Another week passed, brewing hate in the heart of one who involuntarily felt himself helpless, and now word was brought to him that Prince Carl was shaking with convulsions, and that the doctor feared he might die. The King dismissed the page, and began walking up and down his study. His mind seemed

dulled; then all at once a terrible rage surged through him. It was a cold passion, the reflex of his powerlessness. Here he was, the King of Hedenstrom, impotent in the face of things he could not understand.

And there lay the little prince, about to die. Suddenly, out of indifference toward his child, was born a strong sympathy. A deep kinship united them: they alone bore helplessly the blows of life, who alone were kings. His heart went sick at the thought that he might lose the one being who shared his blood, and in a childlike panic he moved to propitiate a power greater than himself, and to save the prince.

He rushed to the room at the end of the corridor. Carl, blue in the face, lay stretched out in a blanket on the floor. The doctors who were bending over him looked up at the excited entrance of the King.

Rudolph whispered something beseechingly which the doctors could not catch.

"It's all right, Your Majesty," said one of them. "The Prince is out of danger."

Rudolph nodded and sat down in a chair.

He watched the doctors chafing and soothing his son. He looked intently at the child itself. Without saying a word, he sat there, half-fascinated, until Carl, crying softly from exhaustion, was put back in his crib. Then he rose and bowed to the doctors, left the room and went to his own, and fell into a deep sleep.

Afterwards he seemed to regain something of his old self. He was still in mourning, still inclined to be silent and somewhat unapproachable, but something more like melancholy than like bitterness enveloped him—a melancholy that, daily, lightens rather than intensifies. Day by day his senses increasingly reasserted their will. He took, not a sadistic cruelty, but his former pleasure, in riding; he ate and slept and hunted and drove out through the city with much of his old relish; he began to feel within him a fresh, unbounded energy which had to be released on something. The most primitive urge of all was reawakened and became imperious.

But the memory of Dorothea, a pure one now of sorrow and regret from which bitterness was almost vanished, called forth a symbolic

devotion which he fought against desecrating. He made his dreams of her a compensation for his wakeful continence; he acquired the power, each night, of restoring the past and of living in the past.

But there came a time when this proved not enough. Dorothea no longer filled his mind, but achieved a compact, inviolable place in it. She was a room apart which one revisited reverently, but not too often. At other times one must live in other rooms.

Dorothea had been dead a little over a year when rumors concerning the King's rather secretive habits began to circulate in Wesa. Court life, except for official functions, had not been revived. Rudolph's interest in matters of State was at best sporadic. "The King," wrote one married woman to another, "seems, from all one hears, to be leading the life of a rich, healthy young man. He spends most of his days with men one knows, and most of his nights with women one doesn't. He appears to play a great deal of cards, and Edgar tells me that in addition to hunting, he has bought

several horses for the racing. I believe he means to race them in Paris next summer. If what one hears (of course we women never hear as much as we should like) of his habits after dark be true, he is shortly going to precipitate himself in a scandal. Every *lady* one's husband won't let one know seems to be mentioned. Some say it's the prima donna of the ballet, others, the beautiful young daughter of an inn-keeper down the Storz, still others, the penniless widow of some cavalry officer: and I shouldn't be surprised if, as a few are saying, it were more than one of them. Have you heard anything about it in Munich?"

But Rudolph had no intention of precipitating himself in a scandal. It was quite impossible, he being who he was, to avoid talk: a King cannot sing out of tune and avoid talk. But that is different from flagrantly provoking scandal, and Rudolph meant to conduct himself with enough dignity and reserve to cause no more than gossip. He was thwarted in his periodic attempts to concern himself with the business of the State; and certainly he had to

do something. He found it a little different to lead the life of the young man rather than of the young King; to be informal with other young men as they gambled, hunted, rode and discussed things, and he knew he would never go too far. He imposed an etiquette, though a far less severe one, upon these relationships, just as he had imposed one upon his court activities. He kept just a little apart: he had many friends, but no friend. And his liaisons were private matters. He pursued them, he discussed them, with no one.

4

But, after all, these years were lean ones. A man in his late twenties who has had power and pleasure and grandeur since early youth, wants enriching experiences. If the power, the pleasure, the grandeur are to satisfy him, they must prove greater in degree, wider in variety. Wesa had nothing new to offer. One tired, not only of roulette and vingt-et-un, not only of fox and deer, not only of prima donnas

and officers' widows, but of one's chef, one's furniture, one's view, one's friends. It required a visit from his sister Katrine and her husband to fill Rudolph, for the first time, with a withering ennui.

Except to attend Dorothea's funeral, when Rudolph had scarcely been aware of their presence, the sister whom he had always disliked and the brother-in-law whom he would not permit himself to like, had not been at the palace for many years. There was something about Katrine's high spirits which intensely bored and irritated him. She belonged in the kitchen. Her voice was loud, her laugh was loud, her face and complexion were milk-maidish, her idea of a good time was to dance too spiritedly, to play cards too recklessly, to get demonstrative when she drank. She had no children (she knew she would never have any) and she ran in and out of little Carl's nursery, to talk to him, to play with him, to hug him.

Rudolph rebuked her. "My son needs discipline, not indulgence. You should remem-

ber that future kings are not reared like other children. Even other children shouldn't be reared as you would rear them."

Katrine—it was rare with her—flared up. "You were sufficiently spoiled, if I remember rightly. And besides, Rudolph, discipline doesn't consist in being heartless. Why, Carl is becoming a morbid, repressed little boy, who really needs a mother or an older sister; but a sympathetic father at the least." She kept silent a minute. "You should remarry."

"Please don't go to the nursery again without my permission," answered the King, ignoring her last few words. But the same thought had been growing in his own mind. For a long time he had surmised that Dorothea's presence was irreplaceable, he had felt too loyal to Dorothea to think of marrying again; his liaisons seemed by far the lesser breach of loyalty. But life palled: having found it once, he wanted again happiness at his own fireside. And perhaps Carl, too, needed a woman's touch—a sensible, highbred woman's. Frankly, he didn't like, he didn't understand this son

of his. He seemed to have none of Rudolph's blood, to be nothing of a prince.

The idea of remarrying grew stronger in him after Katrine and Ludwig went away. The idea of Wesa grew hateful, though as the King of Hedenstrom he would not admit it. But he could very reasonably explain to himself that a tour of the Continent in search of a wife was a proper move to make.

Once he had come to a decision, the old life remained exciting for some time after; the hunting, the dancing, the gambling, the beautiful Frau von Hopt became hard to relinquish. Next month he would go . . . next year. He woke one day to find himself thirty; and he set out.

There are many memoirs of the period which record the progress of his triumphant passage from court to court, handsome, aristocratic, eligible, looking, while he enjoyed fresh pleasures and splendors, with fastidious eyes for a wife. But even in the midst of such dazzling new gayety, the life he had just forsaken seemed thick with inducements, and he

meant to marry now only if he fell in love. In Austria the young princess proved spinsterly, serious, tiresome; in Bavaria she showed disturbing results of inbreeding. Giulia of Tuscany squinted, the two Spanish Infantas were dark, dumpy, Semitic-looking girls, the one perhaps feeble-minded, the other lethargic and torpid. It was only in Belgium that Rudolph was tempted. The King's daughter looked like a King's daughter; she had something of Dorothea's freshness, a little of her charm. Yet she seemed too little fond of pleasure, and too much of books. Her girlishness was deceptive, but not deceptive enough. "A blue-stock, with time," Rudolph told himself. He lingered for many months in Brussels, or in Paris near at hand. She was very lovely, he could not help remembering. But before he made the final step he must be sure.

Prince Eugene of Saxony came to Brussels and wooed the princess in short order. While Rudolph pondered, Eugene proposed. When he heard the news, Rudolph felt twin pangs of

relief and regret. Anyhow, the matter had been taken out of his hands, and perhaps providentially.

He came back to Wesa where he had spent but a few scattered months in over two years. Carl, who was nine years old now, greeted him timidly. Rudolph felt little affection for him, and he felt no longer the necessity for a woman's touch. If the boy was to grow into his part at all, it must be through discipline, through the commanding voice of kings of the past speaking to a king of the future.

As for himself, Rudolph felt he would never marry now: felt the silliness and uselessness of going out into the world to seek a wife, to seek fresh pleasures and differing splendors. Wesa, the palace, the court, the historic Gruenwald: all these seemed right and sufficient to him. And if far down a romantic urge stirred fitfully, he put it back to sleep: in their own good time a great love, a great destiny would find him.

Two years passed by.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAHOMET AND THE MOUNTAIN

I

THE first time Rudolph saw Madame de Bouvain she was dressed, with striking simplicity, in white. What she lacked of the exotic and the magnificent was regained in the singular girlishness of her beauty. So innocent in the arms of gallant men of the world, she seemed, to Rudolph, to offer something of what Dorothea had had. He was instantly taken. He drew somebody aside over the punchbowl and said, "Be good enough to present that lady."

After the lady had been presented, she was asked to dance. The dowagers sat over their fans, saying conventionally enough, "Who is she?" For, strange though it may seem to-day, Claire de Bouvain was quite unknown in Wesa.

MAHOMET AND THE MOUNTAIN

She had been living in England, the victim of checkered fortunes. Affairs did not prosper and at last she came to Hedenstrom, where she knew Count Dube from his London days, and achieved the notice of the King at the first ball to which she was asked.

She was then twenty-eight. Her face had uncommon purity of line, and the added loveliness of an animated vivacity; her figure was exquisite, though not voluptuous; and her manner aristocratic. Dressed in white at the ball where Rudolph first saw her, she must have looked very different from the richly toiled German baronesses in purple and red, in plumes and family jewels; she must have imparted a certain tone, both esthetic and moral; she must, by contrast, have had a compelling charm.

And while the dowagers puzzled over who she was, Rudolph regained his old mastery in the valse and swept her round the room, looking at her in fascination. Afterwards she told some one that he spoke but once; he said, "You are English?" "No," she replied, beginning

the long mystery of herself, "I am a Jewess." The King, already outdistanced, smiled—too obviously.

Later he claimed another dance, and still later, as she curtsied deep, thanked her for the pleasure she had given him, and expressed the hope that soon again they might meet and talk about—*England*. "But we do not know the same people in England," she answered. "Or the same houses. Or," she added, "the same opinions."

Rudolph, having found her cool as a cucumber in his presence, with no personal interest in him, and a wry face for the dowagers, went perplexed to bed. He was fascinated but unenlightened. There had been, of course, the Herzogin Paulina, who did as she pleased, shocked society, took lovers, insulted prime ministers, and set an appalling table; but she had been a healthy aristocrat for all that, a great lady throwing mud where it could not be returned. There had been, too, the witty salonnières of his youth, women who sat up talking about things he did not understand, the *bas*

bleus—was it not?—from Vienna or Paris. But here was a woman who he suspected lived precariously, who to tell you she was *bourgeoise*, it would seem, said, “I am a Jewess,” and who, wearing white and looking virginal, showed far greater contempt than she could possibly arouse, and remained inscrutable. A very charming woman, he had to confess. He would like to know her. He would like to make love to her.

The King was not impatient; he was quite willing to bide his time, to have them meet first in friendship, perhaps casually; to talk with teacups in their hands about hunting, or Switzerland in winter. No one had yet made a fool of him, he believed, and he knew that with this lady his manner must be charming, even slightly humble; it would never do to act the King. He meant in time to offer only the royal bed-chamber, not the throne. The lady must like him. He in turn must appreciate the lady, even though he failed to understand her. They must have things in common, they must be real friends, and then—for he was vain

enough to believe in his own good looks—he would offer her his man’s love, not his king’s capriciousness. After several nights’ thinking, at least, he came to these conclusions, and to one conclusion more: He must find out her past.

It had been Count Dube who secured a card for Madame de Bouvain, and it was Count Dube who sat with the King a few days later, discussing certain matters of Hedenstrom’s policy toward England. Sensing the real purpose of his visit, Dube went quickly on his guard and told only so much as he deemed prudent and necessary. For in time the talk veered round to the ball for the Austrian Ambassador, and to several ladies who had been present, and to Madame de Bouvain, who had interested the King. Did not Dube know her? Yes, they had met in England. Doubtless at Court? No, not at Court; Dube could not remember just where, but probably at the Duchess of Kensington’s or the Duchess of Rye’s. Madame de Bouvain had the entrée in London? “I presume so,” said the Count.

Was her husband in the diplomatic service? Possibly; the Count had not met him. But he was—alive? The Count thought he was. Madame de Bouvain herself struck the King as being an Englishwoman. Dube thought not: she was almost certainly French. Ah, French! But she had the English coloring, the English manner. “Yes, it’s quite noticeable, isn’t it?”

Rudolph suddenly changed the conversation. Not long after, Count Dube got up to go.

2

“I take no counselors, I make no friends,” Madame de Bouvain once said. Life, she found, was barely tolerable. Her early story is vague. Her father, we know, was a scoundrel but her uncle was a duke. The Duc de Rocheville was interested in his niece. He buried her mother, who died when Claire was thirteen, with the Rochevilles, and he handsomely hushed up her father’s scandalous deeds. “You will live with me,” he told the child; and to

some one on his staff said briefly, "Educate her." The girl was beautiful, and from the first, almost indecently clever. Kept in seclusion, without home life or friends, and with a governess who sighed for her uncle, she read books and wrote satiric poetry. When she grew older, Rocheville permitted her a galleries view of the haute noblesse. For awhile her beauty bade fair to lift her, under the duke's admiring gaze, into high places—a prince, a British earl; but every day Rocheville understood her less, liked her less, found in her a hardness, an insolence, a contempt for worthy things, which displeased him and which reduced his sense of obligation to the level of a blood-tie. One night she insulted a general, the next she sauced a dowager. Then she began leaving balls early to meet the duke's young secretary. Her uncle sent for her. "Claire," he said, "you are ungrateful, you are unscrupulous. I am shocked that you would drag the Rocheville name into the mud." "My name," she replied, "is Darront, and it has been in the mud for a long time."

Rocheville outstared her and came to a decision. He would marry her off at once, and there his obligation and his misgivings both would end. Six months later he had made for her an alliance with Philippe de Bouvain, who came of family good enough to suit the duke and bad enough to accept the girl. Though Bouvain, we hear, was much in love with her. She was certainly beautiful and she seemed girlish. As for Claire herself, she opposed the marriage almost with her fists.

Their married life, of course, was dreadful. Bouvain found that behind her virginal face lay brains. He found that within her girlish body worked passions and dark perceptions, ire and contempt. Claire, because by this time, a thwarted dependent, she hated her uncle, hated the monde, the life her uncle represented. She wanted to write. She longed for Hugo, Musset, Gautier; she thought of Madame Récamier in her convent, of Rachel on her stage. Her mind was stinging, alive, instantly penetrating. Philippe seemed to her puerile and clumsy; she to him seemed incom-

prehensibly virulent. She wanted a salon and he a nursery. Neither got his way.

Bouvain, one gathers, was a shallow, selfish and passionate man. He honored tradition: his country, his family, epicurean food, connoisseur's wine, the faultless horseman, the imperturbable gambler. He honored M. de Rocheville. By Claire he was outraged. It was not traditional, to him, that she hold opinions, inconceivable that she express them. And she expressed them constantly, constantly, until in desperation he longed for the corrective of medieval tactics. For though now he knew he had made an impossible match, he was still not to be imposed upon. He would command his wife with his will.

Bouvain strikes us all as a mere type whom it is uninteresting and perhaps by now even unconvincing to write about. He was a mere type. Claire, knowing it, first despised, then disliked, finally dismissed him. The end came after five years it is easy to visualize—silent dinners, stormy quarreling late at night, the arrogance of stupidity, the ruthlessness of con-

tempt, "You shall," "I won't"—little else than that. Finally Claire met a very young and carefree nobleman named Guy de Souailles, and eloped with him to his country-place in Burgundy. We know nothing of Souailles. Six months after their coming to Burgundy, he bade Claire good-by at the breakfast table. Through pride, or possibly through boredom, she did not even return the farewell. Souailles went to Paris and she to Italy.

She knew values; she understood there was no possible chance of being received by her uncle. Rocheville "swore by the code." So, without even chancing a rebuff, she went to Italy and sold her jewels—all of them ancestral. She lived in a high Florentine garret where she rejected the ambiguous offers of a number of men. One day, surprisingly enough, came a letter from Paris, written by her husband but instigated by the duke, suggesting that she return to Bouvain's house and soften the scandal. It was a stiff, aggressive proposal and her answer to it was: "My dear Rochevilles, Bouvains, Loulards, I have broken away for good. I con-

demn you and pity you, and wonder if it's really true you were my uncle, my husband, my aunt. Why you have written me I am not in doubt. But your respective families must wash away this stain as best you can; I may not be a good woman, but I am not a laundress."

Bouvain felt this was not to be borne even for the sake of "ce grand Rocheville." He met and admired the widow of Armand de Grioux. He wrote to his bishop; the bishop sought a cardinal; the cardinal invoked the Pope. There came at length a dispensation: the Bouvains were divorced; then came another dispensation, and Philippe remarried. Claire rejoiced in such unexpected good fortune, and gave a party in her garret for her English and Italian acquaintances. Some one brought along Charles Rewham of London, who soon after became Claire's lover. Summer approached—her second in Florence—and Rewham begged her to come with him to Devon. In much reduced circumstances, she thought she might have something to gain breathing English air. They took boat to England, spent the summer

in Devonshire, parted with asperity—Rewham having met an actress—and did not meet again.

This brings us to Madame de Bouvain's London days and to Claire at twenty-seven. "I take no counselors," she said, "I make no friends." Instead, she wrote and destroyed, read and reflected. Her face remained young, fresh, beautiful; her conversation, when she offered any, had an acid brilliance which some appreciated and others feared. But her voice could please also, and charm; and as a financially embarrassed divorcée, she felt she must charm to advantage. She did not like intrigues; she did not hope for friendship or love; what she wanted was a bearable second marriage with an intelligent man who could recognize style and encourage a salon. The London season, in the end, proved disappointing. Very second-rate men made very second-rate proposals; and very young men made love. But an honorable offer of marriage that she could dream of accepting never came her way. Even when she had achieved Marlborough House and, just once, Holland House, she could

not bring the project off. Macaulay read her poems. "They bite," he said. But men of purse would not. The hook dangled, but the fish, at the last minute, veered. When Claire perceived that no one eligible would propose, wait she never so long, she dropped her shawl on a London stairway and set out for Hedenstrom.

3

Rudolph himself, to everybody's consternation, took her in to dinner. Now she wore black and scooped back her hair with a dull gold comb. At table he seemed exquisitely poised, Claire almost cold. But her coldness came by effort only, a hard wariness chiseling her brain; and Rudolph, from moment to moment, was majestically nonplused.

In his graceful way, however, he tried Hedenstrom in the spring—trees in leaf and lilacs—and Hedenstrom in the fall—riding to hounds and deer-stalking and stopping at low-thatched farmhouses for cider—and Hedenstrom in the winter—the people's ice-carnival

by night. The smooth words ran on, but when he looked into her eyes he could barely mask his own desire, and when she smiled, slowly, quizzically, he felt as if he must turn to the table at large for restitution from his dismay. This was the third time he had seen her: a ball, a Sunday musicale, a dinner; and he was in a helpless trance, fascinated by the eyes, overwhelmed by the smile. She made hard going. She scarcely seemed to listen. Her mind darted off, her dazzling eyes seemed to follow some faraway commonplace, returning indulgently to fasten themselves, for a second, on his shirt-front. As he sat calmly talking to her over a grilled partridge, saying, "But you must have hunted a great deal in England," a sudden violent rage, quite invisible to the eye, rose up in him when she replied, "Not once, I'm ashamed to say," and mentally hurdled six chairs to hear the end of Baron Bülow's story.

They brought in a great plum pudding, and Rudolph said casually: "There was a Vicomte de Bouvain in Wesa a few years ago. Do you know him?"

"I don't know any of the Bouvains. But that is possibly not true," she went on. "Rather none of the Bouvains know me, since one of them divorced me."

This seemed to Rudolph rather outrageous. But again the eyes discomfited him. And now, for the first time, those eyes, sightless and hazy so long, held an emotion in them and were lighted up for Rudolph's gaze alone. His pulses quickened as, with a plunge, he said, "My dear . . . my dear, it is their misfortune not to know the loveliest of their line." In the silence following, she lifted her wineglass and drank from it slowly. A little color flowed into her face, and the brightening eyes fell straight upon him. Together they shared the passing second; figuratively, they clasped hands; then a lackey stood between them pouring out champagne, and Rudolph turned to the lady on his left and Claire to the colonel on her right.

The ladies, that night, were rather wonderfully polite to the King's dinner-partner, and the gentlemen, coming and going between the drawing-room and the card-room, always

halted by the deep green chair near the fireplace. Everybody hoped her stay in Wesa would be a long one, though nobody was able to find out. Everybody tried to discover some one or other in England they might know in common. With all these people she was very open, to a point; she told, now charming, now mordant, but never mysterious, a little about every one in London. It was Rudolph who found her once more mysterious when they talked together during the dancing. That moment at the dinner-table could not be recaptured. When they danced, he almost felt as though she were signaling some message he could not catch to somebody behind him: but their bodies, as the music played, moved beautifully in one rhythm, and he was lost. But after their last dance, when she was ready to go home, she looked him full in the face and said warmly with a delightful smile, "This has been a very proud and happy evening, Sire, for your visitor from England."

"I am glad," he said, mustering the words without knowing whence they came.

It was hard to tell, she realized, thinking the evening over by the fire in her little Kurtstrasse house, what would be best to do. She had plainly infatuated the King. But by an inexorable law she could never be Queen, and did one have more to gain in the end by becoming, or by not becoming, a King's mistress? Did others want the King's mistress for their wife or only for their mistress? Did ladies who said No to a king win great favor through their virtue (or call it gesture) and straightaway win the honorable proposal of a baron? Hard telling. And quite worth knowing, when one's jewels were almost gone.

She rather thought she would . . . not resist the King. He attracted her, and he had a kind of charm. She thought she had never met a man who went through life with so much grace, a beautiful figure one admired for its mindless perfection. Of course she would tire of him: she had almost tired of him already. But then she was always tiring of peo-

ple: such were the people she met. One must pay a certain price for a certain benefit. And by becoming, ever so discreetly, the mistress of the King, great vistas might begin to open up. If she played her cards well, she suddenly divined, she might become the grande passion of Rudolph's life. Just now, certainly, he was bewitched. He wanted her . . . and he did not know how to win her. If she was to be his grande passion—anyhow for as long as she cared to be—he must always want her and he must always not know how to win her. That way she would have much to gain—prestige, devotion, fortune. That way, she would always be desirable to Rudolph and therefore to others. And perhaps if one of the others pleased her, she might marry him.

Even with funds so low, she found it in prospect a delightful game—a game she had all the finesse in the world for playing, and every reason to win. It must not be sordid or mercenary. It need not be. In a definite relationship she need only practice, exquisitely, the art of being indispensable. There were exhilara-

tion and risk enough in the game to take out of one all the meannesses and connivances of pettier intrigue. Those months with Souailles, those months in Florence, those disappointing months in London, had been adaptations and makeshifts. But Claire de Bouvain, great lady at the court of Rudolph of Hedenstrom, would be a career.

It was good to go to bed having found oneself, having set the goal so high and yet so prehensible, having decided to make history in a scintillating capital for five—for ten—perhaps for twenty years to come.

5

After that dinner-party at the palace, people began to take notice; after the Marquise de Roncefort's bal masqué, they began to talk. The evening focused itself upon Claire. In the earlier hours, the men followed by handfuls in her wake. The flirtatious found her gay but elusive; the worldly found her brilliant but brief; the Italian who tried to raise her

mask found her devilishly determined to keep it on, and the Bavarian who tried to steal her fan found that a light, but steady, hand retained it. Behind her mask she remained aloof and difficle; but she managed to preserve some charm, to be never too cold, too cruel, or too indifferent.

Rudolph came at last. He came determined to cement a bond between them, to mount speedily the ladder to her heart. When he saw her from a distance, he said to himself, "To-night must count." So when ceremony had been put behind, and he had danced with his hostess, and chatted with the old duchess, her mother, and drank a glass of claret-cup, he found his way to the great red chair where, now unmasked, Claire sat surrounded. She rose to pay him a formal curtsy; he kissed her hand. Her first glance was warm, caressing, personal; but by this time he was prepared to suspect that her second glance might be wandering, and cool.

"You've not forgotten your promise to dance

with me to-night?" he said. "You won't disappoint me?"

"No, no," she replied. "I want you to tell me about some of the things in the palace—the portraits and bibelots I noticed."

But Rudolph danced in silence. He wanted to make their contact inescapably emotional. He wanted her surrender to arise out of a mood they shared in common: a mood of voluptuous sadness, a mood touched by nothing she could demolish with her mind. All he would say to her when the long intoxicating valse was ended, would be, very simply, "My beloved, I shall come to you in an hour." Against that any woman would be powerless with any man; but she especially with him, for who (he reflected) could imagine a King knocking late at night at a door and not being admitted?

But he never said it. Claire thought the moment too conventionally beckoning. So she forced his silence, she drew him out with a straight, passionless look in her eyes; and he told her, valseing against her breast, that Romney had done his grandmother, and the Duke

of Tuscany had sent the Cellini as a wedding-present to a seventeenth-century queen. When the valse ended, they stood at the door near the stairway leading down to the supper-room, and Claire confessed herself hungry.

People talked, after that night, not because the men had followed in Claire's wake or the King had taken her down to have some supper, but because, thwarted in his desire, Rudolph claimed dance after dance with her, to the neglect of almost staring court ladies and the annoyance of infuriated gallants. The King's poise perhaps remained, but his wits went flying. His behavior was unprecedented. He claimed dance after dance, even long past the stroke of two when the King traditionally left a party not his own; and always Claire outfenced him, charming but inexpugnably withdrawn. Had he been a little less poised, he might have flung out an uncompleted "My beloved . . ." and made himself ridiculous; but had he been a little more perceptive, he would have certainly gone home.

He did go home at last—straight home.

And in more of a stew than ever before, for Claire, at the very end, said to him, with a warm light in her eyes, "I was going away to-morrow—but now I am tempted to stay. You have been very charming to me this evening." By then Rudolph was so upset, and so worn out from eleven vales, and so surprised at the very signal for which he had waited, that his poise, for the first time failed him; and once again he ended the evening on a simple note, replying, "I am glad."

6

Her two unpredictable eyes were gazed at now by an entire capital: fashionable society, en masse, was waiting and speculating. She sold a last emerald and engaged lackeys to pass cakes and tea to the titled who came to her parties; and in Paris the couturiers bustled. Madame de Bouvain, who had taxed the dowagers' memories unsuccessfully just four weeks ago at the reception for the Austrian ambassador, who had gained prestige at the talked-of

dinner-party at the palace, and who had become alarmingly conspicuous at Madame de Roncefort's, was now—whether one approved of her or not—the rage. One had to know her, for one must have one's private opinion of her to be aired in public. One must be ready to say whether or not one thought a certain relationship was *fait accompli*. One could see she was beautiful, brilliant, sophisticated; and did that not mean she was destined to remain in Wesa for a long time to come?

To Madame de Bouvain this serenely conducted lorgnetting was not wholly enjoyable. The ambiguity of her position had its grave dangers: she was accustomed to it, of course, from her London days; but she was very much determined to end it. It made one insecure, capable of going, in an unguarded moment, just a little too far—and then one could be overwhelmed. One would be, not a great lady, but a courtesan—worse, a courtesan with the social position of a harlot.

So Claire matched her wits against a multitude, and gave almost too decorous parties to

which the King was sometimes not invited. She even hid her set of Voltaire in her boudoir. And she fetched the genuinely important people by using just the right tone; she espoused all the right traditions; she was shocked by every lapse, every vulgarity, every overt display of loose morals. It was not exactly dull doing this, because it consisted of acting, and of very precarious acting. Fortunately for her the brilliant days of the court at Wesa were gone, when Pollok was there, and Metternich, and the salonnières—the people who could not have been deceived. With the present court Claire was safe. A few weeks of church and merely cheerful parties, and the people to be most feared were finding her delightful and thinking that, if she *was* the King's mistress, she was a very discreet one who behaved like a person of quality. And after all, nobody was certain.

Sometimes, in the late evening, she drove out to Rudolph's hunting lodge a few miles from Wesa. It would be quite dark and hushed there when she arrived.

She was in command of herself, and he

found her as much of a mystery as before. Rendezvous did not grow out of rendezvous—he could take nothing for granted; each occasion demanded a whole elaborate courtship, a whole study of moods and desires; and though she always, superficially, treated him as a king, she never failed to convey to him that he must plead as a lover. She was equally well versed in the game as he was, and a good deal better versed in anticipating situations. He had to plead as a lover and yet subtly bring to bear the weight of his position. But the lover in him was sincere and passionate.

The situation was piquant but not unprecedented. Many men have fallen in love with women for their beauty, having no more than that in common with them. With time, perhaps, Rudolph succeeded in his intention of appreciating, without understanding, Madame de Bouvain. On her part his mind was something to explore. She liked watching the struggle between the man and the king. When he deferred to her, she was generous enough to feel it something in his favor rather than in

hers. And there were hours when they sat alone together, the woman having conquered the skeptic quite as well as the man had conquered the king, when he told her about his son, when he spoke quietly of the palace treasures which he loved, when he asked about her life in France and England and said with an instinct of humility, "I have missed something—I have never known all that." At such moments she, too, felt the value of a sincere and wholesome contact, she saw that in Rudolph something had been found which rang true, something to which she could respond without the bitter reservations a life of unhappiness and mental sparring had fostered. What was it that in spite of so many discrepancies and dissimilarities bound them together? She did not love him. She was still too unriden of the past to pity him. Was it they were both frustrated? Was it they were both so fundamentally alone?

In time, of course, society became aware of their relationship. But by then every one had got used to the idea and Claire had strength-

ened her position. She slowly became, as she intended, a great lady. That last emerald which she had sacrificed returned to her as but one jewel in a crown. Her little house ceased to be the fad; it became the fashion. People spoke no longer of "cette Madame de Bouvain"; now they said, "mon amie Claire." She herself became steadily more charming and serene. *Etre aimé et être célèbre*—Balzac's human desideratum was fulfilled to her. Slowly people who had been long absent from Wesa began drifting back, finding a meeting-place of their kind in Madame de Bouvain's salon. She had a good historical sense and revived a whole tradition. There was a good deal of the eighteenth century about her "drawing-rooms": elegant, pointed conversation; an atmosphere of leisure and lightness and personality. One demolished a reputation eating pastries or annihilated a social system drinking wine. Yet the atmosphere was modern and alive; where a century before at, let us say, Madame du Deffand's, it had been decidedly *ancien régime*, now one raised one's voice a

little over Wagner, Darwin, Flaubert, Free Trade in England, slavery in America. In the seat of honor, maintaining a discreet silence, sat the King. It was something new to him, this great swell of talk lasting from four o'clock in the afternoon till four o'clock in the morning. There were no intermissions—even supper was passed on platters. On Sunday there was an hour and a half of music—more often Liszt, Schumann and Wagner than Haydn and Mozart. Rudolph resented all this a little: even the music was not quite pleasant. He resented sharing Claire with so many strange people. He liked dancing, cards, young people, talk about hunting and fashions and social precedents. But this was the price for Claire; and listening, wondering, not comprehending, he waited for her voice, the pure sound of which was lovely to him.

Leisurely the years passed by. Madame de Bouvain was a famous name. Her beauty held; her eyes caught a glow they had never had, and the girlishness that had triumphed

over checkered fortunes slowly was lost for something richer. She wore white no longer. She wore Renaissance-cut jewels and wine-colored gowns. She went everywhere, as his consort, with Rudolph. He inwardly confessed that she was a personage equal to himself. Their private life was almost conjugal and domestic now. Rudolph had had eyes for no one else since meeting her; in the bad days which loomed ahead of him—it looked as if there might be war, and the people's demands grew more and more vociferous—he had only Claire to comfort him, to put his head against her breast. For at moments now he was a little afraid. Never had he looked so distinguished as to-day at forty, with a touch of gray about his temples; never looked so sovereign a king. But he felt, nevertheless, distrustful of the world which had grown up to rule for itself, to dispute the place of those whom the centuries had set on firm, majestic pedestals. The times were changing and he loved this woman to the depths of his nature. He meditated now the idea of marrying her; only his igno-

rance of what gesture could reassure the world of its fitness restrained him.

While she, happy now, for six years the mistress of a little house at whose doors no one was too great to knock—she, too, felt something for Rudolph. She felt that at last something like love, or like the affection which just as securely ties one's hands, bound her to him. Out of calculating first contacts of which she was now ashamed had come an indivisible relationship between them. She wondered what might happen if she had a child by Rudolph—would they not then be so deeply bound to each other that nothing could separate them? Already sentiment had crept far in—devotion, admiration, the knowledge of an unqualified love on his part, things which had so touched her as to make her feeling for him intensely real.

The whole thing gave her profound misgivings. She had meant to write, and she had written nothing. She had meant to imprint her personality on later generations, and she had been squandering it in her drawing-room. She had meant her capacity for love to enlarge it—

self upon an almost predestined lover, some one who in mind, in ideals, in ability to suffer and exult would be as great as she; and she had diffused her love in a growing affection which lacked vital roots. But there was still time; still time to regain her integrity of spirit and mastery over circumstance. But was there? If to-morrow she found herself bearing Rudolph a child, if to-morrow he asked her to be Queen of Hedenstrom, she knew her life was molded enough by exterior advantages, she knew it was secure enough in the hands of one who loved her, to make her (she faced the inevitable word) capitulate.

She added another page to her diary: "March 20, 1856." How the years slipped by in Wesa! . . . the predatory years that did not leave one younger; that did not leave one strong.

CHAPTER SIX

FAMILY AFFECTIONS

I

ON the morning of the 17th of March, 1856, a man in his thirty-eighth year returned, after a long absence, to Wesa. He came from England, where for twelve years he had served as chargé d'affaires, to attend the funeral of Count Felix Caeliff, who was his father.

As he rode down the Koenigstrasse toward his father's house near the Schwarzwald park, trying to relax after a fatiguing journey, he found it impossible to ignore the contrast in appearance between Wesa and London. Each time the carriage jolted he was awakened from reverie to be amazed, on glancing out, by the almost medieval aspect of the city. Even the Koenigstrasse, though wide, seemed dirty and old, seemed misted—no, actually caked—with

the impurities of History. The buildings, begrimed and decaying, looked almost incapable of supporting themselves. The side streets were narrow, crooked, and badly paved. Twenty yards off the Koenigstrasse stood heaps of garbage and refuse, so that even on a sunlit morning in spring the air was not quite pleasant.

All this broke up his meditations of an approaching scene to which he did not look forward. From years of service in a world of politics, he had learned to put foremost any matter of government; and it shocked him that government in Hedenstrom should be so obviously incapable. If one drive down a street gave away the whole show, what would a month of investigation reveal? Then, just as he was passing the palace square, the gates opened to debouch an open carriage; traffic was halted and Caeliff caught sight of what was certainly the King. This touch of pomp annoyed him—and when he saw a stupid-looking and poorly-dressed crowd on the curb, it annoyed him more. Something, a mere im-

pulse, stirred in his mind; driving along it took firmer root, and when he drove up before his father's door it was with a real start that he realized he had reached the dreaded house of mourning.

Inside, in a dark room, lay Felix Caeliff, dead at seventy. The house was empty of callers; it had been empty of callers for many years. For many years Felix Caeliff had been a name one spoke with a shudder, when one spoke it at all. Sprung from a line that had always dominated its corner of the world, the grandson of a general who went insane, the son of a landowner who committed suicide, Felix inherited dark blood. All his life he was hated: as a bully at school, a martinet at home, a mad bull in the House of Nobles, a stallion in society. His capacity for strong drink was staggering. With every meal he drank quantities of neat rum; and he was so violent a lover that, to drive his lust to farther limits, he would first tantalize and torture himself, and gorge his fill of food.

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In very early manhood Caeliff, we are told, was personable; but lust and rage hardened and coarsened his face, and by the time he was forty—his first wife dead, his second a hopeless neurasthenic—he was a complete outcast from society. He was forced to resign from club after club because he quarreled with servants, insulted visitors, domineered over fellow-members; and he was four times suspended from the House of Nobles because he four times did violence to its traditions.

By each of his wives he had one son. Hans, the elder by three years, was now a tall, heavy-set man with black mustaches and a red, fleshy face. His own mother had died before he was a year old, and his stepmother had never been able to cope with him. His father had trained him with a whip to excellent advantage: the son came to see virtues in both the scourger and the scourge. More phlegmatic than Felix, who had habitual rages, he was just as thick-skinned and harsh. He liked this using a whip: it came in handy with the gardener and the gardener's sons, and handiest of all with his

younger brother. Except in his mother's bedroom, Edmund was always being hounded. His father, having trained Hans with the whip and cudgels, sought to repeat the performance on Edmund; and he had no objection to Hans, as an obedient lieutenant, lending a hand. There was plenty of opportunity. Edmund trampled down the lawn, Edmund broke his father's pipes, Edmund opened the bird-cage; he defended himself arrogantly when accused of something, he made counter-suggestions when given an order; he was constantly a trouble-maker in the classroom and a culprit on the drill-ground. There were more whippings than dinners; and the boy grew more and more beside himself with indignation. At ten he could not quite tell—perhaps all boys had fathers and childhoods like his; but at fifteen he knew that his father was a brute whom every one avoided and that his brother was a bully whom every one disliked. At fifteen he realized quite well that he was as much handicapped as a person born with a club foot. He knew why his mother had lain for so many

years in her bed, helplessly sighing "My poor son," and showering him with kisses until she fell back, weeping, on her pillows. He hated these two beings with their raging tempers and calculated cruelties; at night he lay awake trying to see a way out for his mother and himself. But he saw nothing to be gained through rebellion. He felt angry even with his mother for lying in bed apart from the scenes of torture, irresponsible toward the son who bore the full brunt of punishment. And he waited for the time when he need submit no longer.

Then, luckily, books, and work at the *gymnasium* and a few friends brought something better to life. Luckily, too, Hans was called up for three years' service in the army and passed out of daily life; and Felix, old enough now to demand companionship, turned from Hans to Edmund, and softened a little, except when in his rages, toward his younger son. He took Edmund hunting and riding with him, poured him out a couple of fingers of whisky, and at length, in a brusque, commanding fashion, took him to a brothel. This was perhaps the

most fortunate thing that happened to Edmund prior to his eighteenth year. Where before he was oversensitive and overfastidious, crushed by feelings of helplessness and melancholy, and frightened at moments of crises, he came out of the brothel feeling a new sense of mastery, having gained great confidence from an ordeal which he faced without any. He felt, somehow, that his eyes had been opened to life, which might, hereafter, be cruel, but could never again be mysterious.

His mother's death, soon after, removed for him the one haven where he had always gone and found a place to unburden himself, if only in attitude; and it had this beneficial effect—of putting him entirely on his own feet, of taking away that sense of last resort which the mind nurses so pathetically. Thereafter he gained slowly in mental reassurance: the need of self-preservation forged the weapons of self-preservation; every deficiency in combat—the old despairs, the old self-pities, the old suits for mercy—disappeared; and in their place came a poise his father could not shake, a tact his

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father could not circumvent, a prescience his father could not achieve. If the son mislaid the keys to the stables, or destroyed by accident an important letter, he was able, when the moment arrived, to hold his own. There was something about his eyes, which both smiled a little and held their ground; something impersonally sure about his words which kept Felix guessing. And though he often departed as angrily as he came, he departed the loser.

Edmund did brilliant work at the *gymnasium* and persuaded his father to send him to the university. Felix himself was of keen if unbalanced mind; and gradually, as his limbs grew stiffer and his breathing more difficult, forbidden to drink under doctor's orders and sexually tired out, he began spending more time with his son. He recognized in Edmund the qualities which might have given his own life meaning; like most men of his kind when their physical pleasures are taken away, he grew bitter over his wasted mental life, he conceived himself another Cæsar or Napoleon who had flung away his power. "You will do what

"I might have done," he said to Edmund; and suddenly he was disgusted with Hans and contemptuous of him. Edmund became the favorite. The two of them really got along: not because Edmund had any affection for a man who had wrecked his mother's life and thwarted his own childhood, but because, through growing self-discipline, he made it his business to get along with everybody.

Hans, however, was an exception. The man like the youth was an ungovernable sadist, a sullen, cold, intractable Junker who returned from the Army committed to its code, and who had none of that vital wasted power of mind which, in its very inability to restrain, made Felix a pathological rather than a vicious specimen. Hans now resolved more than ever to iron out in his brother those instincts of democracy and generosity and skepticism which had no place in the make-up of a right-thinking nobleman's son. Unlike the clash between Edmund and Felix, that between the two brothers was one, not of personalities, but of point of view; and his point of view was some-

thing Edmund would not surrender. He soon ceased to be tactful and became defiant. Hans, eying his brother's friends, his brother's interests, his brother's ambitions askance, regarded him as he might have regarded a leper. He cursed Edmund, he commanded him, he threatened to put him into uniform. Felix, whatever his sympathies, found it much too amusing to interfere. And Edmund himself, suffering in spite of all his contempt for Hans, could not wage defiance forever; with his mother's money to maintain him, he walked out of his father's house on the morning he came of age.

He had influential friends, and they secured for him a good place in the Ministry of War, where he worked for almost four years. They were years of intellectual growth and human contacts. His past lay behind him, and slowly he shed it. One moved in all classes of society; one read; one listened; one suspected that not everything was well in this kingdom of Hedenstrom; but for the most part, one kept one's opinions to oneself. One did better, meeting

one's match at conversation, to show the quality of one's mind by an illuminating reply. One did better, meeting women who were ready to teach young men, to sit at their feet and arrive at the feminine—which is the only practical—understanding of life; to learn from great ladies the manner of all combat, as from great men the causes and reasons. One did better to absorb the colors, the stuffs, the harmonies of life as they are revealed, to a discerning mind, in everything: in a sunset and a Giotto, in the Seventh Symphony of Beethoven and the Cathedral at Chartres, in the glance of a man toward the woman he loves and in the glance of a woman toward the man she hates; in all manner of reminiscences, of confidences, of speculations, of superstitions, of customs, of etiquettes. At twenty-three or four, one did better to question and not assert.

And so, moving about in a world of statesmen and great ladies, and in a world of ministry clerks and secretaries, and in a world of dissatisfied young students reading Proudhon, and in a world of unscrupulous and degraded

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déclassés, and in a world of scatter-brained belles and preposterous fops; weighing the aristocratic tradition against the humanistic, monarchy against democracy, Christianity against religious doubt, human indulgence against human restraint, one could learn, Edmund Caeliff perceived, very much that would some day carry one to a position where, independent of others, one's personality could have weight and meaning.

2

At twenty-five Edmund broke up a liaison with the illustrious Baroness von Auckland, retaining all her good wishes for the future, and with a young milliner's apprentice named Charlotte who cherished his memory above all else in life, and left Wesa to see the world. He hoped to find something new in other societies, other governments, other women. He went to Vienna. But Wesa had been called "die kleine Wien," and sure enough here was another Baroness, another Charlotte; here the streets

were full of Hanses and the taverns, it would seem, were full of Edmunds. One was courtly and bored and stood up to dance. One sat drinking champagne with a lady who said: "And how did you leave Countess Reichhofen?" One sat drinking beer with a student who shouted: "Mark my words, there will be revolution!"

He went to Paris. It seemed different. Some one shouted, "Quick, the man with the beard is Gautier!" Somebody whispered: "Louis Philippe is breathing his last gasp, all régimes will soon be dead." He was shown some chapters of a work by Karl Marx. As likely as not some one would wake him up in the middle of the night and take him to a party in the Quartier. People talked politics everywhere. People talked literature, played music, were gay even when they went without sleep. And there was Madeleine d'Atre who took Edmund with her to Normandy. "I shall hear of you again," she said when they parted. Her small luminous face with its deep gray eyes was close to his own, dark, bearded, slender. She was

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going back to her husband and daughter, he was going to England; and in this moment of parting he felt the most exquisite emotion of all their ecstasy. They had contemplated flight, divorce, fresh subterfuges, anything that would keep them together; they had been almost ready to give up the future for love. But Madeleine crept out of his arms and stood leaning against the mantelpiece, saying slowly what she did not want to say: "No, I must go back, and you must go forward. In the time that is coming, you must do something more than stroke my hair; it will be a time of great enterprises, and you will have a place in them." He looked at her. "All that does not matter, darling," he said after a very long silence. "Ah, now I know," she said, "how very much it matters. This is farewell."

Edmund went to London. The life and the people disappointed him. Certain things which he had taken for granted long ago were quite without sanction there. There was not only an odd sense of morality which in time he came to understand as one comes to understand a

difficult proposition in geometry, but there was no conversation, there was no such thing as a good table, there was no house where one could feel at home. Edmund found those who gave parties inhospitable and those who went to them ungracious. The air was not charged with blowing currents of modern thought or that undercurrent of human rapport which in Paris, and even in Vienna or Wesa, drew people together and gave them in meeting a sense of adventure. Here was a land where a cold sun did its slow work of enlightenment; where people, not so much individuals as members of one race, were making a structure of government which had the firmness of granite and not the momentaneousness of fire.

In London he met a former friend, Baron Freihof, the new ambassador from Hedenstrom. Freihof needed an aide at the Embassy and offered the position to Edmund. For the next twelve years Edmund served the ambassador and met everybody in England. He watched Palmerston and the Prince Consort; Benjamin Disraeli rising from authorship to

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politics, Grey and Russell; he met Carlyle and John Stuart Mill and the new Laureate whom one saw about town. He achieved a notable if minor position in London society—his name was coupled with one or two distinguished women, and it was thought he might marry the daughters of one or two distinguished men. He knew all sorts of people—slipped into their ways, drank with them, argued with them, listened to their plans. The self-discipline which had begun as an antidote against his father's temper and against whatever he had inherited of his father's blood, now could be relaxed. He could live life fully without fear, finding worldliness a stronger as well as lighter armor than self-discipline. The skepticism he had acquired was better than the circumspection he abandoned; it was gracious, tolerant, adult—and equal to every emergency.

He wondered, at times, how things were in Hedenstrom: he heard that the Court had grown gay again, and that some one who was reputed brilliant and who had herself moved about London a few years before, walked by

Rudolph's side and had her drawing-room. Hedenstrom! Some day he must go back, but he was in no haste. Whenever he could, he spent his holidays in Paris, once he went to Italy, but often he was seated at his desk dealing with some reverberation of world politics which affected Hedenstrom. He looked a man full-grown: not tall, not robust, but with a fine head and deep brown eyes and hair that was still thick and dark. Though still writing formal despatches in an obscure Embassy, he had learned more about life than how despatches are written. He was in no hurry; but when the time came, he would write them no longer.

3

Although he had not seen his brother in nearly fifteen years and they met over their father's bier, nothing was changed in their feelings toward each other. On Hans' part swagger and arrogance had turned into a brusque, clipped air of authority; there were fewer words and oaths, but the tone was just as domi-

neering. He greeted Edmund without even a sense of curiosity. He only knew that he, now, was Count Caeliff; and that Edmund was in his house. The towering hulk, the red face, the black mustaches, struck Edmund as comical; but too much of the past rushed back at him to make the comedy enjoyable. He had learned to take people as they came, to shed no tears over their deficiencies and waste no words where they seemed useless: but Hans touched his Achilles heel, and even after so long a time and so long an education, provoked him.

They sat at supper the night after their father's funeral. The courses dragged on; Edmund tried to keep the conversation impersonal, but Hans kept staring at his brother, showing by his eyes that he had something to say.

"You belong in Wesa," he got out at last. "I'm glad you serve at our Embassy; but you've grown too damn English for a Caeliff. You don't even speak German any more without a kind of accent. I shall never forgive you for chucking the Army and running around Wesa,

years ago, with every undesirable you could meet. Oh, I knew of it well enough, and I have a long memory. But I'm going to suppose you've learned your duty by now. You belong in Wesa, where you should marry a woman of your own class and country. You're smart enough, if you want to be, to help the cause. If you stay here and behave yourself, I'll give you more than you deserve: you can live by yourself and I'll make up what you need to maintain your position."

Hans poured himself some brandy. "Think it over," he said brusquely.

While listening to this speech Edmund felt the old anger and agitation which Hans had always aroused in him suddenly collapse. His sense of humor at last had set him free; and Hans might rave, might threaten, might admonish all he cared to; he could never again be more than a man with a red face and comical mustaches. . . . But Edmund could not forget the dingy old-world city he had come back to, the poverty and hardship which had stared him in the face; and his brother's preposterous

lecture somehow emphasized his memories of them, and brought him to a decision.

He waited a minute before speaking.

"You're right, Hans," he said. "I'm not going back to London. I'm staying here, as you put it, to help the cause. But I'm afraid it means running around once more with undesirables."

Hans gave a sudden start, then stared at him, infuriated. "Look here!" he said. "If you are still a young firebrand . . . if you mean to be treacherous . . ."

"There'll be nothing treacherous about it," Edmund interrupted. "I'll furl my colors from the housetop—my own housetop—to-morrow." He slid out of his chair as his brother crushed a thick walnut with one convulsion of his fist. "Good night," he said, and went upstairs to pack.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RHYTHM OF TIME'S LABOR

I

BUT Edmund Caeliff next did nothing at all except take a small house across the Schwarzwald park and receive old friends. Since his tilt with Hans, he was possessed by an urge for action. The contrast between Hedenstrom and England; the knowledge that men like Hans were in power here; the vitality within him that had gone so long unused as he sat working quietly at his London desk, all conspired together now to make him restless. He had seen too much of the world to be anything of an idealist, and to lift Hedenstrom out of its present rut was so gigantic an undertaking that its proportions appalled him. But what else was worth the pains, what other career could really suit him better? He was tired of the

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life of embassies, it was too late to find pleasure in becoming a great diplomat; and, after all, the day of the Talleyrands and the Metternichs was over. It was too late also to wish for mere power, mere celebrity: at thirty-seven born Napoleons are well on their way to triumph—or defeat. The sum of human experience proclaimed the quick passing of the human being: he struggled, he flourished, he died. But it was something different to set a whole race in motion, to carry it forward, not with the cold precepts of an idealist, but with sweat and anxiety and one's own hoarse voice. And for Edmund himself, after such easy-going years, it would be something different to get into the thick of things and fight. Though he did not believe in miracles, it was worth seeing whether he could perform transubstantiation in Hedenstrom.

His old friends came to see him. Some, though twelve years ago they had seemed less so, were stupid and reactionary. Others, their incomes secure, subsisted in "carpe diem." A

few of great family—traveled men who found their own tradition a little stuffy—seemed more sympathetic, but it was obvious that none of them felt strongly enough on the subject to take the initiative. Then there were the others he had known—the rebels, the young philosophers and socialists of fifteen years ago; or the ministry clerks—still ministry clerks who protested they would always be ministry clerks because they had no friend at court, no chance of getting on.

Almost all these people—those who had simply resigned themselves; those who wanted to throw bombs; those who said “Rome was not built in a day”—were quite useless. At first, in his eagerness for action, Edmund had been inwardly more excited than he realized; but he found his innate skepticism rapidly reviving. He had not counted on finding men who saw things with disinterested minds; but it disheartened him to learn that so few of these people had even any practical understanding of what ought to be done. Edmund supposed he was only one more victim of the old chimæra

of universal progress. But he remembered a brilliant Jew named Schloss, who still, after fourteen years, clung to a clerk's job, his mind burning with ideas, and he saw in Schloss something not within the compass of *laissez-faire*. Well, if an illusion was necessary, let Schloss represent that illusion. If one Schloss could supplant one Hans, the world would be moving on; and—he admitted it—the change would give him personal satisfaction.

There was a sense of adventure in it which appealed to him. Who could say what would happen? He would test his powers. The next election he would stand as candidate for the House of the People.

2

He stood in evening dress, at the entrance of Madame de Bouvain's drawing-room, at that fractional second when for the last time one still speculates concerning somebody one has heard about, but never met. He had been just three weeks in Wesa, yet no one had failed

to speak of Claire de Bouvain: how beautiful she was, or wise, or witty; how she was the confidante of the King; how she was about to marry him, to bear him a child, to write a book, to publish a sonata. Every one insisted that Edmund must know her. He wanted to know her; he had first heard of her a long time ago. Count Michaelis offered to get him a card to her next Sunday evening musicale; Dube, whom Edmund had met in England, offered to present him.

—He liked the atmosphere of her drawing-room. It was filled, yet neither noisy nor restless; people seemed both alive and reposeful, and their talk flowed evenly from group to group, with no one presiding or holding forth. He liked the tall white flowers and the tall white candles in their high silver holders; he liked the wavering candlelight soft on the faces of the women.

“Come with me,” said Dube, and led him to a corner of the room Edmund had not seen from the door, where Madame de Bouvain, in a claret robe crossed by a gold sash, sat in a

narrow bishop's chair. Edmund was presented. She smiled briefly and gave him her hand to kiss. "I am glad you could come," she said. "Every one speaks of you; you've become a Topic." For several minutes they stood talking about changes in Hedenstrom and England. Then some one came up behind Edmund, "You will find a place near the piano, I think," said Madame de Bouvain, and he turned away.

She was a beautiful and charming woman, he thought; and then forgot about her. He saw friends and went to sit and talk with them. The talk grew animated. But suddenly the talk stopped; some one, it seemed, had entered the room.

People rose at Rudolph's entrance as though to the sound of a trumpet. Except on the Koenigstrasse the day he reached Wesa, Edmund had not seen him in over twelve years. He was now a handsomer and robuster man than he had been, and every feature of his face had strength and beauty. He looked his part, standing tall and alone in the doorway; he

looked his part as he advanced toward Madame de Bouvain rising out of her chair; he looked his part when later, sitting in that chair, he played host in accordance with royal tradition. Edmund turned round a little so that he faced Claire and the King. She was not conspicuously paying Rudolph attention or excluding others from her talk; but to Edmund it seemed that some added charm, or it might have been warmth, was evoked of her; that there was a subtle heightening of color, a trifle less of detachment—that the scene became delicately intimate.

And then, quite suddenly, Edmund's senses were ravished: he looked at Madame de Bouvain and could not look away. He was excited, inflamed. What had been curiosity over how Claire and the King would appear together, became resentment. Edmund admitted the resentment was unreasonable; later, he supposed it must be jealousy. But chiefly he realized this—that Madame de Bouvain, with whom just half an hour ago he had talked casually, reacting quite impersonally to her

charm, now became some one to cherish and desire, some one who, across a not wide room, seemed hopelessly estranged from him and hopelessly inaccessible; and that the King, a magnificent person in full evening dress, was a haughtier person than he had reason to be.

All she did that evening seemed fine to Edmund, seemed right. He watched as from a distance, and it moved him to discover that she did elemental and simple things as faultlessly as she talked to savants, or played Liszt, or conducted her complex relations with the King. He noticed in her manner of holding a candlestick and smelling a flower, or of eating a bunch of grapes, an essence of simplicity. She was a great lady in whom were gathered, for these occasions, such qualities of mind and spirit and bodily grace as cannot flower singly: they have grown out of passions and sufferings, but they bloom only when such emotions are past, when mellowness unites and pervades them; and in their bouquet is a something, compact as a gesture, which we try to describe in vain.

He did not try to speak to her. Surrounded by so many people, he felt they would find conversation, such conversation as he desired, futile. The talk that flourishes in salons is not the talk of one excited person with another. He waited patiently. He saw Claire turn again to the King, and profoundly wondered whether she loved him. Now more than at first it struck him that she might. You could not tell from their faces—hers denoted an unfathomable emotion; while Rudolph's for a moment looked tired. Edmund was more afraid of a tired face than of the kingliest countenance under Heaven.

Suddenly Edmund was past all desire to look at Claire for what he might learn, or to solve the mysteries of Rudolph. He was overwhelmed afresh by feeling. He felt young again and importunate, and something more than his senses, than even his passions, was stirred. Then his heart felt quiet in him, and he slipped away.

On the next afternoon but one Edmund took the rather pointed liberty of calling upon Claire. She could not imagine what brought him as, descending the staircase, she tried to guess. He had made a vaguely favorable impression upon her at her party, but she had supposed, from his keeping aloof, that he was bored. As she entered the drawing-room and saw him, she was suddenly very glad that he had come. And when he kissed her hand and said, "Forgive me for the liberty I've taken," she realized he had come simply because he wanted to see her.

"I'm very glad you came," she said conventionally, smiling at him. Each, the one firmly, the other involuntarily, caught and held the other with his eyes.

There was a long moment of silence in which neither moved to sit down. A clock ticked, louder and louder it seemed, on the mantel. Then, "Let me ask you something," said Edmund. "Would it please you to hear that some

one not without . . . self-possession, is in love with you?"

The words were such a shock, were so incredible, so unpredictable, that Claire looked again, as though for the first time, at the man who spoke them. There was no stammering, no blushing, no mute pleading, no sense of desperate effort. She saw his whole face lighted up by a smile—a smile that seemed to come from his eyes; and the quality of that smile, confronting her suddenly, moved something very deep within her.

She looked away from him, and instantly wanted to look back. . . . Life had prepared her for nothing like this; it was a moment in a book, in a fairy-tale. He seemed like some one she had conjured up; but vital, too, and alive. The eyes, the smile, the hands were revelations of his inner self, speaking the language she had always sought. The dream she had long ago abandoned had suddenly come true. She looked at him, again and again, while in her mind little evocations which seemed irrelevant

carried her away from him, and then back to him.

Then it was her heart which grew animate and full, while her mind grew sharp and laughing. "*Would it please you to hear . . . ?*" he had said; they were already like words she had known since childhood. And it was easy to answer them with light-headed wit; for she felt light-headed, she felt gay, she felt young again. "It would be *lèse-majesté*," she said, urbanely knocking five years out of her life.

And so in a single gesture they identified themselves. One might call it the love at first sight of two people who could instantly read character. What their senses desired, their minds confirmed. Both had lived the life of society, as skeptical participants, for many years; and both had scanned a thousand faces, seeking this rare response. When they met it was not surprising that they should fall in love. After all, had not every one said to Claire, "You must meet Edmund Caeliff," and to Edmund, "You must meet Madame de Bouvain."

Even before they met, all Wesa, presumably, could perceive the affinity between them.

But to them, on that first afternoon, it seemed so miraculous as to be almost unreal. When the first astonishing moment was over, they sat down side by side, not giving way to love, but cherishing it, holding it in suspension a little longer. They talked with a kind of restraint. It was very much like a novel which begins *in medias res*, after which must follow an orderly recapitulation, and possibly much time will elapse before one reaches the very point where one began. Only, as in the novel, one knows toward what one advances. There was an edge to the conversation, an undertone, an intention. Slowly the gates opened, and between them flowed a lifetime of hitherto unuttered thoughts, impressions and desires. Their two selves were profoundly sympathetic, and the discovery came into their lives as not an event, but a climax. Transported though they were, they yet lived through their happiness with the utmost awareness, lived through it without blurring its effect.

When Edmund rose to go, he took both her hands in his and made of his single kiss a pledge. "To-morrow night," he said, "will be moonlight. Let us ride together to Schönfluss."

She nodded, moved by his sensitiveness to time and place in arranging their real betrothal; while he, without saying another word, turned quickly and went out.

4

Two days later, on a brilliant April afternoon, a closed carriage passed outside the old gates of the city. Madame de Bouvain was driving with the King. Each sat looking away from the other out of the window, and both were silent. Claire trembled slightly, but Rudolph's hands, one on top of the other, lay miraculously still. Sitting as they were, a casual observer might have supposed they were angry at each other. A more careful observer might have supposed they were bored. But a very sensitive observer would have seen that they were embarrassed.

They were more than embarrassed: excited, and possibly afraid. Rudolph had come to Claire's house an hour before and been overwhelmed by the fresh miracle of her beauty. It struck him as something recovered in all its glory from a long time back, from a time before he knew her. The sight of it aroused very profound emotions in him. He came forward. Claire smiled quietly and held out her hand for him to kiss. He took it; then, overcome by something, he attempted to draw her to him. But with a gentle sort of dignity, she drew herself up, drew herself just perceptibly, back.

Each acquired self-possession so instantly that both at the same time said some trivial thing. But Rudolph could not help continuing to look at her and failing to understand. He had seen many expressions on her face: boredom and weariness and meditative calm; anger and gayety; tenderness and decision. But he had never seen this particular expression, this sense of transfiguration, and he did not know what it meant.

Her voice seemed to cloak little things with a sort of wistfulness. But he was disturbed, and abruptly asked her to advance the hour for their drive. They got into the carriage, but sat in silence and growing constraint. A curious constraint. Neither of them found it difficult to gloss over the usual difficult moments; each possessed natural *savoir-faire* and had mastered the amenities of life. But with them now, the more they veiled the surface, the deeper seemed the pit; and at last each turned away from the other to attack the situation by making it intolerable.

Each looked out of the window at a countryside touched with the pure color of spring, not knowing it was a luminous picture they would remember forever. Each listened instinctively for the sound of the coach-wheels. Each waited what seemed a very long time for the other to speak. Then Rudolph, turning a composed but serious face toward Claire, said to her: "I wonder, my dear, if I have not displeased you?"

"No, no," said Claire reassuringly. She put

her hand on top of his, but though the chance was offered, not inside.

"Then I was wrong," said the King in a strong voice. "I am glad I was wrong."

Claire, having blundered through cowardice, patted his hand in silence. She heard the coachman flick the horses lightly with a whip. She felt the carriage accelerating its pace, rose up slightly in her seat, and then fell back. Rudolph smiled.

"Rudolph," she said quickly, "we're up against it." The slanginess seemed somehow to offer her courage. "Don't think me too ungrateful."

He looked at her, slowly and unwillingly comprehending. His expression barely changed, but a second of shocked agony filled his eyes. It was Claire who looked away.

Her impulse was to be brusque and firm, to end it for both of them as quickly as possible; but she realized that she must be kind.

"My dear," she said, "I *have* been grateful. You've honored me and made me happy." He gently pressed her hand, and for a moment

she saw only him and was moved by him. With the profound knowledge of instinct, he perceived the change in her, gathered strength in his eyes, and caught her hands in his.

"We can go on being happy, Claire. You don't know, perhaps . . . how I feel." He struggled with himself to say many things that stuck in his throat. He struggled how best to say the one thing that must be said.

"Will you marry me?" he asked, just a little pleadingly.

Claire, whirling with strange and interpenetrating emotions, suddenly felt a sharp chill pass through her. A few seconds of silence, during which she dared not look at the man who had just ceased talking, marked the disruption of Time. Then she was in command of her senses again.

The profoundest pity and helplessness possessed her. When she saw an incontestable look of love on Rudolph's face, again she wavered. Again she wondered. But the blood responds for long to no false excitation; touched, the heart still knows. Even as she answered

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Rudolph, there was a vision in her mind's eye of moonlight on Schönfluss castle and of two who gazed upon it.

"No, Rudolph: you would give too much, and I have not enough to give. Please . . ."

The coach rolled on in the late afternoon sunshine.

"I beg of you," he began.

"No, Rudolph. Forgive me and understand."

They saw a little peasant boy playing with his sister in the barley fields. Boy and girl suddenly stopped their play and dropped a curtsy in the direction of the carriage. Something fixed in Rudolph responded to it. He drew up.

"I understand. But . . . I did not know. Perhaps I am very dull and should have known."

"You couldn't have known," Claire said. "I only knew myself two days ago. Don't let me cause both of us more pain than I must. Let me tell the little there is." She stopped, and Rudolph waited.

"Rudolph, I couldn't guess. I was very

happy with you and, you must believe me, more—more moved than you suppose. But this thing happened and I can't deceive myself. It's—it's too real." She paused and looked at him, started to say something further, and then kept silent.

He began to speak with a wild look in his eyes; then lost that look and sat like a figure on a pedestal.

"May I ask—?" he said at length.

She could not get the name out.

Then she saw Rudolph looking at her.

"Edmund Caeliff," she said quickly.

His mind, a blank, retraced itself among the syllables. "Edmund Caeliff," he repeated. "I don't know him." But incredulously, a second later: "Oh, but I do, I remember now. *Claire!*"

She had no answer, and he said nothing else. She sat still, not daring to turn his way. Across the fields the first steps of dusk approached. There came from a distance sounds of the country in spring: evening bells, birds nesting in the trees, cattle lowing. But inside the carriage there was silence.

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Then Rudolph turned and held her with a long, straight look which was almost stern. Steeling herself, she bore it. Without moving or smiling, she waited for him to speak, to turn away, to relax his stare. He did something very different: he closed his eyes.

"Be happy," he whispered before reopening them; and with something of a gesture, he took her hand and held it, tenderly, a little possessively, as a father might his daughter's driving to her wedding. So they drew up in the Kurtstrasse before her house.

5

Then Rudolph, barely glancing to right or left, drove alone down the long avenue toward the palace square. A good many people had collected there, as was not unusual, to watch the King returning from his drive. It was almost dark, but a few last glances of the spring sunshine still brightened the air. The carriage faced the palace gates, and the crowd, moved by the hour, the season, the immemorial sight,

burst into cheering. The whole effect was exquisitely spontaneous.

It took Rudolph momentarily out of himself. But even before the cheering died away, a profound depression had fallen over him. Even these reassurances of what he stood for, surrounding him in the beauty of an April night, even the familiar vision of the palace which symbolized his greatness could not dispel his gloom. For the man in him had failed, and the man was suffering.

That night Edmund and Madame de Bouvain were together; and Rudolph stared through the opened window into the darkness. A conflict of emotions went on within him. To the depths of his being he felt hurt, so hurt that his anger, his indignation, his astonishment each in turn were checked. He did not know what to do. A thousand things that linked him to Claire and that made her desirable rose up in his mind. And Caeliff, whom he would not recognize if he saw, a stranger, a nobody, bit into his blood and numbed it with poison. He set his mouth hard at the thought

of him. But the next moment all feelings had subsided except his love for Claire. To regain her he felt the need of desperate action.

It occurred to him that Claire might be only infatuated with Edmund, and in a little while forget him; but instantly he realized this was not so. And he saw that the whole burden lay with him. What must he do?—speak to her or write, risk all on an attitude of kinglike strength or one of human weakness? For a long time he sat, rejecting frantic inspirations, moment by moment feeling more helpless.

He decided that, agitated as he was, he must wait. The need for action was urgent, but he must wait a little longer—another day, another night—until he could better plead his case. And as though that decision promised others, his mind relaxed, and he went to bed and slept.

Thirty-six hours later he had reached the decision that only by seeing Claire again had he still a chance. It cost him a maddening effort to sacrifice both his vanity and his pride: it quite killed the unspoilt, unselfish part of his

love. But there was no helping it; and he got into his coach and drove to her house, for only thus, only through taking her by surprise, could he be sure of seeing her again.

His footman sounded the knocker on Claire's door, and Rudolph prepared to get out of the carriage. The door of the house and the door of the carriage were opened simultaneously, and Rudolph advanced. Madame de Bouvain's servant was speaking hurriedly to Rudolph's footman, who stood at the doorway in confusion. As Rudolph was about to enter, the footman said in a disturbed, rapid voice: "Pardon, Your Majesty, but the man says that Madame de Bouvain was m-married this morning and has left for Vienna."

Ignoring the footman, Rudolph wheeled abruptly and walked with precise steps into his carriage. There came from above the sound of a door slammed against the breeze.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HARSH LANGUAGE

I

WHEN Prince Carl was ten, his father had sent for him, and asking him to remember very accurately what he was soon to say, went on in a stern voice:

“It is time you understand your future duties. One day, as you know, you will be king in my place, and God has ordained that you should not rule in any casual manner. You must never for a moment forget—I have never for a moment forgotten—that God works His will through us, and that as our subjects owe us allegiance, so do we owe them protection. You know that?” He paused, and the boy nodded. His voice grew sterner. “You *say* you know it, but I am not convinced. I have had occasion to notice you are a dreamy, careless fellow. You look like a tradesman’s son, and you walk around with your hands in your pockets and

your eyes on the ground. You ride disgracefully, you can't hold a gun with a steady hand. You command no respect whatever." Again he paused, and then in a tight, level voice continued:

"I won't stand for this. Do you want others to see you as I do, and to hold you in contempt? A Holmesburger held in contempt; a king whom his subjects laugh at! I shan't punish you now, but this is no empty reproof. You will act your part, or you will be taught to act your part!"

The boy, who had remained standing, kept looking at his father and away from him many times. The level voice had held up till the end, and when Rudolph had finished, invited no reply. Carl stood still, uncertain whether to speak or go. At length the silence and the situation became so intolerable that, do what he would, his eyes filled with tears. Rudolph stared. "Cry-baby," he drawled softly, while the boy sucked in his breath. Rudolph turned away, and in still another voice, "You may go now," he concluded, and Carl, half-dizzy, left the room.

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He never forgot that scene. For a few weeks he lived in a state of terror, he did the simplest things, walked, rode, bowed from a carriage, sighted a rifle, conscious of a relentless eye upon him. He foresaw endless whippings and, further ahead, years of disgrace and unbearable ineptitude. In his dreams Rudolph stood above him swinging a switch and murmuring slowly the divided syllables "Cry-baby." He saw schoolboys trooping down the Koenigstrasse, envied them and indulged himself with hours of self-pity: for it seemed to him that Life, with incomprehensible responsibilities, had overtaken him, and that in a night his childhood had vanished.

He was a small boy, fair like his mother's people, with inquiring gray eyes and a nervous, defenseless mouth which quietly smiled at times. When he was seven, his old nursing-woman was let go, and thereafter he lived in an ancestral fortress solely among men. He slept alone in a little room at the far end of a corridor, the same in which he had been cradled as a baby. A tutor who had lost a leg

as an Army officer was his only constant companion—a man who had no love of boys, or indoor things, or sensitive human relationships, who also could not play games with Carl or ride with him. Occasionally the boy rode with his father, more often with a too respectful riding-master. A few noblemen's sons were invited to the palace from time to time, and Carl found them agreeable; but there was never a perfect sense of equality or accord, for either Carl was unequal to them at games, or they were too conscious of Carl's position. It gave him pleasure to conduct them through the palace, to open the heavy doors of the audience-chamber and the great trophy room, or to climb breathlessly to the ancient bell-hung tower. But it dismayed him that these splendors of History conjured up no more in their minds than the literal truth of men who lived and died fighting and ravishing and sitting in judgment; to him the colonnaded centuries of the past were haunted with pathetic gallantries, heroic denials, and, not least, the sorrows of unfulfillment. His morbid mind saw beauty

tarnished with wickedness, saw queens alone on the tower imploring aid of God, and heard the great bell tolling for warrior kings whose horses neighed and sobbed in the darkness.

Of his father he saw little. Their meetings were almost ritualized, so many rides a week and so many lunches, informal but not quite comfortable interviews over school-work and exercise, attendance together at Mass on Sundays in the King's private chapel, and very occasionally, reviews of troops to which Carl accompanied Rudolph. Very often Rudolph was charming, but the boy, driven in upon himself by an early realized sense of inadequacy, never took his father as his ideal; and that was fatal. At first Carl admired Rudolph, even envied him: for a long time he despised himself for being so incompetent at the things which were expected of him. But in time he discovered that his father had no respect for men Carl thought heroic: only soldiers, only kings and conquerors, were to be emulated. Nor was Roland so great as Louis XIV, Vercingetorix as Barbarossa. Carl was still a boy,

but self-knowledge had given him, protectively, a feeling for values. These values clashed with Rudolph's. When one cannot ride a horse well, one decides it is not important to ride a horse; and though it is still possible to envy in secret a good horseman, it is much more difficult to like him.

Before he was twelve, Carl was sent to a military school. He was not unhappy there, but he still felt misplaced. For one thing he was again outclassed at games, and poor at soldiering. For another, he feared letting himself go, feared being too much himself in the belief that his father would criticize his conduct as undignified. Actually Rudolph would have done no such thing: he himself fraternized well in his fashion, and he certainly had another conception of kingliness than a shy, stand-offish nervousness. But the boy did not know this, and there began a long agony over maintaining a position that came hard with him. He felt not in the least like a future King, and the rôle became half abhorrent to him, and half enviable.

One summer he came home to find his father changed. There was something human and unaloof about him, a simple friendliness not quite amounting to affection, but wholly lacking in formality. He complimented Carl on an improved appearance, a better posture, a more graceful conversation. It did not seem outside his rôle to take an interest in humanity. Yet something still held the two apart: their two lives, tacitly estranged so long, could not merge at once; and of the two it was perhaps Carl, so sensitive as ever to be suspicious, who could go the less far. In fact, this new Rudolph, whom one no longer feared and still did not love, had less force than the old. He had never been a father, but he had been a King: and now he was but an amiable stranger.

It was by pure accident, two months later, that Carl discovered what had changed his father. In a Vienna newspaper he read a veiled reference to Claire de Bouvain. Two days later its meaning flashed across his mind: and thereafter, in Rudolph himself, he found innocent enough but telltale verifications. The

boy, romanticizing, wondered about her, and made it his business to catch sight of her in her carriage. Later he heard of her salon. And one Christmas, when he was fifteen, he met her.

Evidently she had wished to meet him, for the King said a trifle grudgingly, "I'm taking you to meet a very famous lady," and set off for the house in the Kurtstrasse. At first Claire proved perfunctory in her friendliness. The very young did not interest her; but she must have wished to catch sight, at least once, of Carl, because she realized from Rudolph's remarks about him that he was very different from Rudolph. But when they talked and she found him an inarticulate, moody schoolboy utterly without social gifts or poise, who looked away almost before he really looked at her, there arose an inner demand to draw him out, to win him over. She spoke of many things, but she spoke always as inquiringly as possible. Carl seemed to weigh every word he used in reply—could Rudolph be looking a little angrily upon this brief but unmistakable vis-à-vis?

—and revealed to Claire nothing except his fear and dislike of his father. But she found that very much of a master-key.

They parted uneasily; but they had interested each other, Claire in particular interesting Carl. For already at fifteen there had taken root in him, as it takes root so often in those who find friendships difficult, a desire to surprise the secret qualities in others; a curiosity about people's character; a thirst for analysis. He had met this woman whom his father loved, and he had seen his father's eyes upon her, and hers upon Rudolph, and hers with an inexplicable look upon things here and there in her drawing-room; and he had watched her fingers moving in her lap, and heard her speaking in a voice which opened up corridors beyond mere talk; and in that drawing-room, as it so happened, with its ticking clock and its high candle-light, he had come for the first time upon some one who resembled those women in books whom he accepted, but without understanding, since he had never known them.

He had entered a world with overtones. He had entered the world of grown-up people.

The next year was a nightmare. Confronted by the terrors of growing up, without counselors of whom he could approve, and without friends, Carl gasped for help. So many things were now expected of him. If Rudolph no longer threatened, he took all things for granted. "You'll ride to hounds with our party," and "You must dedicate this fountain alone"; "I'm expecting you to win your lieutenancy with honors," and "Will you please receive Prince Tchernoff without me?" These things might be got through with passable competence if they arose now and again; but they made up one's life. It seemed to Carl that he stood always poised for some new dive into icy, unfathomable waters.

And that was just half. The other half was this loneliness, embittering and annihilating one's life. One performed these excruciating trifles without other compensations . . . never lived in that world which, seen in glimpses, appeared so enviable. He was a morbid ro-

mantic. The great names, Medici, Valois, Plantagenet, sounded kingliness for him; they were poetry; even the firm straight line of men like his father was a sort of battle-music; but he himself, groping, awkward, impotent, whose place was in a monastery of other days or a quiet country cottage, was a little cry in the dark.

An immense self-pity overwhelmed him, and alone saved the day, for without it he must have done irresponsible things in despair. Was he never to find the things he wanted?—music, books, a mother and father, girls whom he saw on lakes in the moonlight, boys to corroborate all new, bursting, bewildering sensations, far countries where one went, who knows, to die romantically. Already at sixteen he was wandering morbidly outside the sphere of youth: for in youth it is unnatural to realize what one has missed. And worse than everything else, sex troubled him a great deal, coming upon him, not as a natural urge, but as a secret, unruly terror which he nursed beyond all proportion of significance.

Then something happened which permits the temptation to philosophize. The course of History is less changed by decisive battles and significant laws than we believe; the story of a whole place and period is altered rather by some trivial deflecting moment in the private life of two people like a king and his son. When Carl turned seventeen his destiny was still unshaped: he might have become one of many men.

Until that spring his father had been indulgent, overlooking in Carl many of his very obvious shortcomings as an heir-apparent. He had seemed to grow younger and brighter; then overnight there sprang up a third Rudolph, whom Carl had never seen before. This Rudolph was so desperately miserable, so much at sea, so suffering from deep hurts of vanity and what might be supposed a broken heart, that all force in him seemed relaxed; he was pitiful. That his father was not in control of himself and so plainly revealed his helplessness, shocked Carl; then gave him a secret joy of which he felt ashamed. What had hap-

pened to break this statue of a man? And again the Vienna newspaper, with a pointed announcement this time, told him. . . .

This was a suffering Carl could understand and never underrate: he felt a very great sympathy with his father. He brooded, and saw his father like himself, at bottom perhaps many times more lonely; one who led a life without real adventure, one not able when wounded to cry out.

Seeing his father weak, Carl grew stronger: at moments he regarded his own troubles with a kind of humor; and attitudinizing, he thought: "Perhaps now, after so long, we can understand each other, and I can help him a little. . . ." He fell asleep in an uplifted, energizing mood. He woke next morning and dressed, and walked the great length of the dining-room to find Rudolph, at breakfast, a changed figure. The eyes had regained their public stare; the lines remaining in the clear-cut face were lines of strength; the hands in repose, the voice clear and colorless as glass, the sense of trimness, of size and assurance,

confronted Carl and said to him, precisely:
Noli me tangere.

The boy's ecstatic compassion beat about within him, seeking an outlet, begging to be useful, and not futile and lost. His nerves, as he ate, were all on edge: once, in replying to his father, his voice broke. Then Rudolph, buttering an egg, said unconditionally:

"I've decided, Carl, that you must serve full-time with your regiment. I want you to report for three years' service to-morrow."

Knife and fork clattered down on Carl's plate, and without knowing it, he half rose in his chair. He sat down again and started to say something, but it became a confused mumble. His father looked at him, without expression, in silence.

"But, father—" Carl began again; and again he stopped. "Father," he said, his voice rising, "you promised—rather you told me, I need not go into the Army. Don't you remember?"

"I would not force you, for personal reasons, to serve; but for other reasons, for every reason that affects us in our royal capacity, it is ab-

solutely urgent that you do so. You should realize that, and you should be proud to go."

Something black and violent flew before Carl's eyes. His nerves splintered, and all that pent-up sympathy which was now to go eternally unused suffered within him a chemical change into wild, undisciplined fury. His father had let him down, and an appalling future confronted him. Everything within him concentrated into protest; protest was too mild, and became defiance.

"I won't go!"

He waited for his father to speak.

His father said: "I am surprised at you, I am too much ashamed to argue. You are going . . . how can you dare to think you are not?"

"Father—" He could think of nothing to say. Rudolph was eating again, quietly and naturally.

"I shall disgrace you if I have to go."

"The Army has learned how to handle every form of insubordination and incompetence. And you are forgetting that I am commander-

in-chief of the Army as well as your father."

Carl struggled to say something adult and pointed, to defend himself after the manner of the righteously self-assured.

His unconscious spoke:

"You're paying me off for your own unhappiness on account of . . . her."

He bit his lip.

"I have no more to say," said Rudolph. "You report to Colonel von Ramm to-morrow evening at half-past five. You need not come to see me before you go."

For a time Carl was too dizzy to see or think. It must have been a few minutes later when he looked for Rudolph and found him gone.

2

The young Prince was treated exactly like the other lieutenants in his regiment. Every morning he got up to do the day's work, to drill his men and execute the orders of his superiors. He had problems in military maneuver to solve, and a course in advanced mathematics to attend; and besides these

things, there were the particular inspections and forms of etiquette to be gone through, which constituted the only recognition made of his rank. He lived a full day, always confronted by the terrors of uncertainty. From moment to moment he did not know how he could do what was demanded of him, and though he generally did it not too badly, he always felt it was the last thing he was capable of. And beyond that he hated it; he hated it to the bowels of his being; hated the officers, the men and the barracks; hated the uniform; hated with preposterous intensity the sound of the bugle.

There had been nothing to do but go, and after a day and a night and a second day of casting about for escape, of childish, far-fetched plots for deliverance, of fitful hopes that his father would change his mind, a sulky and outraged youth marched out of the palace straight to the quarters of Colonel von Ramm. There, suddenly braced up with a small reserve of dignity, he became docile and acquiescent. Perhaps in his despair he pinned his last hopes

on finding the Army not so intolerable as he imagined it would be. But that last hope quickly fled, and he had hardly gone to bed before he was plotting release, recovery, revenge.

The idea which came to him slowly arose, not when ideas of revenging his father's treatment were uppermost in his mind, but after the restraints and uncongeniality of Army life were proved and unmitigable. It came strangely: first with the wild lunacy of a dream; then with the impulsive cleverness of a solution one would not use for a problem of one's own, but would offer rather elatedly to some one else in the same predicament; finally with the much reasoned, much detailed inner compulsion that knows there is no possible other way out. He would renounce his rights to inherit the throne!

All his life, he knew now, he had wanted to do this; he had never desired nor felt able to be King of Hedenstrom. Had he the power to effect, as king, the dreams by which he lived, or even to bring into being a new order of life, full of simple, flexible, graciously harmonious

ways, he might have resisted his temperament; but in this day a king's appurtenances were only a harness, his deeds were only the execution of some one else's will, his life was only a public institution sustained for the public pleasure at the public expense. He had some sense of tradition, and not the faintest leaning toward democracy, but thwarted always and destined always to be thwarted, unfitted always for the life he led, and destined always to be unfitted, he had his own peace of mind to salvage. His father, at the moment when he sought most to be a son and to serve in the life of another, had sentenced him to this; and now for all these considerations his father was to be repayed and Carl released.

Once he had come to a decision, he began to evolve the details. By the law of the land he was articulated to the Army for three years. To publish his intentions before his Army-service expired, might be to bring down upon his head a severity which would make an end of him, or at the least provide a siege of torture compelling him to recant. By waiting, he

would avoid this, he would be older and better able to cope with the situation when it arose, and he would have time to plan his future life. There was fortunately his grandmother of Savoy's unentailed bequest of half a million lire to keep him alive: and he thought he should like to be quit of Hedenstrom, to travel, to settle down somewhere not too near, and write. Meanwhile three creeping years must be endured.

He endured them, rather better as time passed, but never well enough to be changed in mind; he was discharged, went back to the palace and saw his father, of whom he had seen very little in his three years of service. He said nothing to Rudolph, who was beginning now to look middle-aged and just a trifle stouter; for a detail in his scheme, which might help enormously, had presented itself. Though a question of delicacy was involved, Carl meant not for that reason to forego it.

In the past three years Edmund Caeliff had become the dominating figure of the House of the People, a distinguished orator, a respected

raisonneur who demanded greater freedom and equality in the name of the people and inaugurated much legislation, in the House, for their benefit. He had become the focal figure in the public life of Hedenstrom. Carl, now that the great moment of his life was upon him, felt shaky and incompetent, and he meant to approach Caeliff and be fortified, if possible, by his espousal of the momentous act. Delicacy, perhaps, supervened—there are tacit loyalties that should remain unbroken to the end; but it was the surest way, and Carl did not mean to reject it.

3

When Caeliff came into the room Carl, seeing him for the first time, felt more than anything else the contrast between them: the unrelieved strength tempered with humanity and understanding and the sure purposefulness in Caeliff set against his own timidity and vacillation and weakness; but then he saw the eyes, inquiring and yet reassuring, he saw the still hand and wrist resting on the arm of

Caeliff's chair, and with quick intake of breath, he spoke:

"I must apologize for coming to you, but it was very important. I have something very . . . very important to say. I must ask help of you, you must give it to me, you must help me." He stopped for a second and continued more slowly: "Herr Caeliff, I have thought for a very long time of doing what I shall tell you. Herr Caeliff, I . . ."—for a moment the sense of all he was daring held him back, then a sense of pride hurled him forward—"I am going to renounce my rights to the throne. To the throne," he repeated.

Caeliff was not electrified, but he was certainly surprised; and he sat without speaking or starting to speak, it seemed to Carl, interminably. The boy felt like a murderer who has confessed for the first time his crime. Still Caeliff did not speak; he did not speak until Carl was on the point of saying something further himself.

"That strikes me as a pretty drastic step," said Caeliff. "And at your age a pretty difficult one. It means cutting yourself off from the life

you've known since birth, without any knowledge of the new one ahead of you."

"That's why I have come to you," said Carl, reflecting on none of Caeliff's words but the last. "I want you to help me. You are powerful, you are respected; if you will support me—I can be successful and have the chance of living as I wish."

Caeliff crossed his legs and smiled at Carl a little gravely. "Of course I may be wrong," he said. "You haven't told me your reasons."

"Herr Caeliff, I'm not fitted to be a king. I am clumsy and ridiculous in my public actions. They embarrass me. They make me unhappy. A king can do so little these days, and what he *can* do, I cannot. I simply couldn't go through with all the little rites expected of me. I want to live my own life. And besides," he went on, following a sudden intuition, "it is time there were no more kings. Their usefulness is past. It's the day of the people—the people you are fighting for. Won't you help me keep others from forcing me to swallow my words? Won't you lend me your support?"

Caeliff leaned forward a little, as though suddenly the situation had come to interest him in a personal way; as though Carl were Carl, and no longer the prince. "I think you're right," he said. "I don't believe in kings either. But I'm not quite sure you are old enough to take so decisive a step as you propose. In spite of all your feelings now, you may regret it." He watched Carl shake his head vehemently. "I say this although I agree with you. But that is one thing; and to help you, to officially help you, is another." He stopped for a second. "I can't do that."

Carl made his first good tactical move; he remained silent, forcing Caeliff to go on.

"You see, I'm in an unfortunate position. Your father and I—there's that to remember. And if I were to support you, it might seem ungenerous on my part, or at least indelicate. Personally I could bear that, but there's this, too: at the wrong moment it might weaken my influence and so, in the end, harm not only me, but also my plans for the country."

"Herr Caeliff, I shall do this with or without

your help. But without your help, I shall probably fail. I—fear my father, and he's likely to do anything." Caeliff said nothing to this, and Carl burst out: "Oh, must I tell you how really bad it is, how really weak I am: I hate my father." He said it again, now with a little bravado: "I hate my father!"

"Tell me," said Caeliff, "is it only because you hate your father that you contemplate this?"

"No! No!" Carl cried out hysterically. "I do not believe in kings! Herr Caeliff," he said, summoning now all his strength and wit, "in a thing so big, the little things shouldn't count. I wasn't constrained from coming by a little thing; don't, for the same reason, refuse to help me. If you will speak out, in the name of the people, that my renouncement is wise, far from hurting your position, you will only strengthen it the more. Don't you see that?"

Caeliff's great and expressive eyes were upon him, eyes that made him wonder how he could have said so much and that now, quite definitely, silenced him. He sat, nervous and

played out, waiting. Suddenly he heard Caeliff laughing boyishly.

"You certainly make a good spokesman for yourself. I suppose I'm beaten." Stopping, he looked at Carl and changed his tone. "You're sure you realize everything involved? All right, then; I shall make your decision the desire of the State. I'll try to keep your father from interfering with your plans. And afterwards, perhaps I can help you, too, though you must be prepared to lead a new life." His mood deepened into something born of many realizations and memories. "You will not find it hard," he said. . . . "But there's one thing you must do: you must tell your father of your decision before you make it public. Perhaps he will offer you a handsome compromise, but don't consider it. And say nothing for awhile; I must think things out." At first so distant, Caeliff had suddenly brought himself very near, Carl thought, wanting to express his gratitude. He saw Caeliff looking at him, for a moment, as a friend would look; then they both stood up. They had bowed when Caeliff came into

the room; they shook hands when Carl, stammering with emotion, left it.

At last Carl could speak to his father. Rudolph heard him through a kind of long prologue, words failing to come smoothly while his father, not with the cold indifference which would have prodded him into defiant courage, but with tolerant good will, looked at him. Rudolph had given Carl credit for his passable record in the Army, and undue credit for his never having complained again of going into it. He felt well-disposed toward his son. But suddenly Carl was saying wild, misguided things about royalty, and obligation, and not being born to . . . Rudolph attempted to interrupt. "And so, sir, I am determined to waive my rights to succeed you. I am making known immediately the fact that I have renounced, and no one can prevent me!"

"Are you mad?" asked Rudolph, not missing the new determination in Carl's look.

"No, I am not mad," said Carl. "I am very serious and sane."

The King hesitated over his words, main-

taining his composure by a great struggle of will. "This is nonsense," he could not help saying. "Have you no pride of rank, have you no love of tradition, have you no sense of proportion, have you nothing but this childish whim to do a sensational thing?"

"Nothing," said Carl; and then bethinking himself: "It is not sensational."

"There is nothing that I can think of lower in a man than running away from his obligations."

"These obligations mean nothing."

At this Rudolph pierced Carl with a stare of unqualified contempt. "I won't hear any more of this. You have spoken your piece. I forbid you to do what you plan; I forbid you ever again to think of such a thing."

"I shall; I must. I don't recognize the obligations you scorn me for deserting."

"I see that." He hesitated. "You are like your grandfather."

Carl waited a second, then went on. "I have already spoken to Herr Caeliff about it. He is—"

"You have what? You have spoken to Caeliff? To Caeliff?" Rudolph was standing now, half beside himself. "I think," he said, "that if ever there was a person unworthy of being a king, it is you. I know now how fathers have been able—to kill their sons. I never want to speak to you again as long as I live. . . . But I still forbid you to renounce your rights!"

Carl only shook his head.

"Herr Caeliff will announce my decision in the House this evening. I go from here directly." Their eyes met in one short glance. "You need not speak to me," Carl flung out, "as long as you live."

However much was at stake, the King's pride restrained him for a moment from going on; and in that moment Carl, shivering and trembling, found the door and raced giddily down the corridor.

The King stood on. A minute passed. "I forbid you," he said, not loudly, but in the most terrible voice he had ever used.

CHAPTER NINE

STERN EVENTS

I

IN the palace Rudolph lived alone. Time had sped by, carrying with it not only his youth but all its landmarks and splendors, and what existed now was chill and unfamiliar. It seemed but yesterday that the palace was lighted up for people who danced all night long, and now had vanished. The audience chamber had grown dusty, the great ballroom and the great dining-hall bore that anachronistic air which is true of ballrooms and dining-halls long since abandoned and now maintained, for public inspection, by the State. Even most of the servants were new; the old ones had died or been pensioned off.

Rudolph, having felt three times the bitter impress of frustration against his heart, sat pon-

dering again and again the ways of the new humanity. He tried very hard to see what mistakes he had made, but it seemed to him that others had debased and disrespected his calling. His father had failed because he had been a fool, and Rudolph had scarcely done better because he was not one. What he had learned in the salon of Claire de Bouvain had been, to him, an unwholesome lesson of misguided sophistication that had nothing to do with the life of a king and still less with the life of a country. What had these millions of people who were becoming articulate to gain which he could not give them? In other places, no doubt, poverty caused justifiable discontent, in other places people were bled at the point of a sword, and sent off in battalions to die that the King's coach could take its way into farther provinces. But Hedenstrom—except perhaps for the new Wesa, which was none of Rudolph's doing—had more than enough for all, the King lived uncomplainingly on his moderate income, nobody was sent off to die for the greater glory of the realm. There must be

STERN EVENTS

rulers, and there could be no better rulers than those whose training for kingship began in the cradle. One had one's own privileges, of course, because one knew, as few others could, how to use them; but for the most part one gave over one's life to others, suppressing illness and heartache, the moment's inclination and the day's plans, to do what was expected of one.

In a single respect Rudolph found himself guilty of dereliction. At times he had allowed his private life to overshadow his public responsibility. In a sense he was not to blame, since there had been a cause for this: had his solicitous judgments for his people been once approved, or a few times respected, he would never have turned his mind away from them. But he had struggled against the House to no avail and with loss of dignity, and with a kind of joy the House had always seen fit to oppose his wishes as soon as it ascertained them. Law after law, for which, in view of his promises of personal good faith, there had been no need, had been passed in contempt of him; tradition

after tradition which seemed to him to keep inviolate the spirit of their national past, the people had disregarded; dream after dream of his for the glorification of Hedenstrom had been neatly outraged by the gentlemen in the House.

The House, Rudolph felt, was a screen between him and his people. They still cheered lustily when he passed out of the palace on those ceremonious drives he took for their delight rather than his own; hardly a day went by that they did not ask for his blessing of their churches and schools, that a boy was born and not named after him, that a touching tribute did not come from them to the palace. And he knew about all these things, and remembered them. He could truthfully say before God that however much his love for two or three had been turned to hate, he still loved his people and was moved by all they did for him.

And he in turn now resolved to do for them. Times had changed, but he would accept the change. Hedenstrom should become again all it had been. When he was dead and his

cousin, Duke Stefan, came to the throne, he should find a united and strengthened Hedenstrom and a people reaffirming the greatness of kings. He was forty-seven years old. He had learned much. He had suffered much, and through him, others should be spared suffering.

One hope which he had nursed since Carl's defection, but which seemed doomed, was that of providing Hedenstrom with a direct heir. He was almost certain that he had become sterile; for in the last days of his love for Claire, in the days when he had decided to marry her, he had hoped that she might bear him a child. But that hope had not been fulfilled and, since in the second year of her marriage Claire had borne a girl to Caeliff, the cause seemed to lie with Rudolph. This trick of Fate gave Rudolph a great deal of suffering: he longed for a son who might resemble and in time succeed him, and he felt that its effect upon the people would be supremely good. To see a manly young prince growing up from childhood would revive in them a more persuasive tenderness for the palace than any other

thing. It might mean everything. . . . But it must come to nothing. Rudolph could not reasonably doubt the truth, and it would be tragic to defy it, to marry again and face the indignity of such a marriage.

And perhaps the House would raise its arm, if he did dare, to oppose that also. . . . Was he beginning to fear the House as much as he hated it? No. The King was not a captive; the palace was older than the House, and would survive it.

2

The three years that followed saw great changes come over the palace. It opened its doors again, as when Rudolph first ruled and when Madame de Bouvain first lived in Wesa, to a quietly sparkling court. It came and went, in a decorous and never extravagant way, between Wesa and Vienna, Wesa and Prague, Wesa and Dresden. At Wesa one might see the Duchess of Brandenburg, wearing her famous emeralds, come into the newly regilded

ballroom; the Empress Eugenie of France in the flush of young womanhood; belles from all the German courts sitting down to supper to hear the toasts of Prince Louis Metternich; one might overhear Duvariau, when Rudolph spoke of the trumpery claims of Alexander of Baden as heir to the throne, say: "Genealogy is like solitaire; cheat a little, and the thing will come out." And at times a few of the guests secretly crossed the Schwarzwald park to the house where Gambetta might be staying, or Renan and John Stuart Mill, or even Richard Wagner.

But this represented the lesser side of change; at half-past nine each morning the King went to his study and worked over reports and memoranda, with a rigorous attentiveness to their meaning. At last the House was beginning to feel a little the impact of his being. It was as ungracious as ever, but for the sake of his objectives, the King requited rudeness with courtesy, impertinence with consideration. The King pored over the minutes of the House

and despatched to it countless suggestions, conciliating it as far as possible by a spirit of co-operation which came hard, but was his tribute to the ends at stake. With one person, however, he refused to have any but formal written dealings: Edmund Caeliff, the Prime Minister.

In spite of his tireless zeal and unimpeachable intentions, Rudolph found it impossible to make any headway with whatever original plans he might evolve. Everything was shelved or voted down in the House of the People, though often approved by the House of Nobles. Still, out of failure he resolved to forge an eventual victory. If, as was true, he could never make the House want what he did; if it meant less than nothing to approve what the House had already approved, then it was necessary to offer approval first of what the House had not yet approved, but would in time. Hedenstrom was beginning to emerge as industrial and modern, and though that was the last thing Rudolph wished for it, he now deter-

mined to sponsor, as publicly as possible, and on a larger scale, this growing national tendency. If he could not restore, he would construct.

For the next two years he was busy working out in detail plans for a great network of railways and telegraphs in Hedenstrom. He was busy evolving a plan whereby, with a minimum of taxation, the school system of the country could be improved and enlarged. He was busy negotiating, in his own name, with great foreign companies about up-to-date methods of mining and foresting and canning salmon and smelting. He was busy calculating with engineers the costs of new bridges across the Storz river at Muhfeld and the Graustainer river at Graustein. He was busy working out a comprehensive State budget with bankers from Frankfort and London. He was busy planning a new department of State to control commerce and industry. He was writing letters to several of the houses of Rothschild attempting to interest them in a Wesa branch. To achieve these ends he had come as close to

pandering as he could ever come and as his dignity would permit him. Two or three rising bourgeois capitalists and two or three snobbish members of the House became his close counselors, allying themselves with him because of promises it was not inconceivable he might some day be able to fulfill, and for the more immediate reward, tacitly tendered, of the entrée into court society.

All that Rudolph planned and evolved and documented was in the air, and bound, sooner or later, if circumstances permitted, to come to pass. But in several instances, Rudolph succeeded in antedating normal legislation. His plan for a great system of railways and telegraphs, though the House in debate chewed off its edges, was adopted; and his suggested improvements for exploiting industries like mining, smelting and forestation, slowly but aggressively replaced the old. His *coup de Rothschild* amazed the House as much as it did the banking world. And he dedicated in person the bridge which rose over the Graustein at Graustein.

In the year 1866 the King would be fifty years old. The 30th of August was to be a public holiday of unparalleled rejoicing, and an exchange of magnificent gifts, of gold and land for the poor on Rudolph's part, and of a bronze statue of the King in the palace square on the people's, was to be ceremoniously effected. The King had come more into his own. Caeliff still held the true office of power, but he was too austere and intellectual to be anything like a public idol; and Rudolph's effective program of the past few years had regained for him the friendly interest of the people. His popularity was by no means exceptional, but in the excitement of his birthday celebration, it might well become so.

But in the midst of the preparations there arose something else of far greater importance. For many years Frankfort and Hedenstrom had been on barely civil terms. There were many reasons. In Alexander's time, Frankfort had tricked him into a disadvantageous

treaty. Frankfort had several times refused to extradite to Hedenstrom criminal refugees whose deeds, some said, were instigated by the Frankfort king. Most important of all, Frankfort rebelled at having to pay heavy duties and transportation charges to Hedenstrom for using the Storz river to carry goods to the Danube. In 1862 a war was narrowly averted through the practical diplomacy of Caeliff, who realized the superior strength of the Frankfort state. But the situation between the two countries did not mend, Frankfort began encouraging its exporters to bilk and underpay Hedenstrom in their use of the Storz, and ordered all imports from Hedenstrom to be dumped back upon it. Then Frankfort, itching for war and secretly supported by Prussia, began an insulting procedure. She first declared that if the transportation rates were not materially reduced, citizens of Hedenstrom must pay a visitors' tax when entering Frankfort; and when this provoked no results, she refused citizens the freedom of the country, and began arresting them.

To Caeliff, who saw the Prussian hand behind the game, War was at all costs to be avoided; for however righteous, it could lead to nothing but defeat and worse terms of peace than any terms which might be drawn up in a state of peace. If Hedenstrom reduced, or abolished, the transportation tax, it might satisfy Frankfort for a time; and perhaps for long enough to prove genuinely effective, since to Caeliff's way of thinking Prussia would soon be occupied with more important things than the fealty of Frankfort.

But to Rudolph, enraged by such insults and seeing his dreams of a greater Hedenstrom substantiated by turning a just war into a conquest, there could be only one course of action. Either Frankfort must apologize and rescind her recent laws, or such outrages must be revenged by force. And while Frankfort was holding her sides with laughter, the King and the Prime Minister began their war over War.

Caeliff could not make his private fears about Prussian support a public accusation, or in a trice Hedenstrom would have Prussia about

its head. But he cautiously told the Cabinet and a few members of the House; and demanding to see the King in person, he told the King. The King, considering the idea as objectively as he could consider any idea of Caeliff's, truthfully doubted it, and said further that if it were so, Austria, on the verge of war with Prussia herself, would support Hedenstrom. Caeliff told the King, told the Cabinet, told the House, that Frankfort's forces outnumbered and outgeneraled those of Hedenstrom; he argued that the Storz revenues, while useful, were by no means indispensable; and he finally said that the cost of the war would be catastrophic, and that if Hedenstrom did not lose, as he knew she would, she would win only at the cost of her treasury and her youth.

But Rudolph had popular indignation on his side; he had the urge of patriotism, the urge of self-respect. For the first time in seventy years the palace became a living power, and acquired as direct and imperious a voice as had been true of it in the Middle Ages. The people saw eye to eye with the King; the House

of Nobles saw eye to eye with the King; gradually, persuaded by eloquence, the House of the People saw eye to eye with him; and certainly Frankfort did.

On the 27th of June, after a few half-hearted parleys and a brusque ultimatum on the part of Hedenstrom, Rudolph, on a mounting vote that grew and grew as the House became excited, was ordered to declare war against Frankfort. On the 28th the forces of Frankfort marched toward the frontier of Hedenstrom. On the 29th the forces of Hedenstrom marched toward the frontier of Frankfort. On the 30th supplies began coming from Prussia into Frankfort, and 40,000 Frankfort uniforms were fitted on 40,000 Prussian soldiers.

Rudolph stood, in full uniform, on the palace balcony, the great courtyard below him packed with people. Now they cheered the King; now they cheered the first picked troops marching by; now as one great voice they took up the strains of the national anthem. Then the days began passing, and side by side,

throughout the day and into the night, Rudolph and Caeliff worked together. Nothing personal mattered: the whole heart of the King went out to avenge the country; the whole mind of the minister, to save it.

Rudolph's troops—still in their own country, where Frankfort wanted them to be—won the first battle against the oncoming troops of the enemy. In Wesa they lighted bonfires and fired off salvos of cannon. Then, two mornings later, came news of disaster; and every morning brought news of fresh disaster. It was now certain that Prussia was supporting Frankfort. She shut off supplies by way of the Baltic, and Hedenstrom had to turn southward. Rudolph wrote, and Caeliff revised, a secret negotiation asking military help of Austria. But Austria refused it, and though she did not grudge supplies, she gave them at an exorbitant price.

By the first of August the active troops and reserves had all been exhausted. Conscription began. Food grew scarce, military supplies defective and fewer, money almost unobtainable.

The King sacrificed three-fourths of his private fortune; noble after noble sold off for foreign money the unentailed portions of their estates. And from the front came news of disaster, and of fresh disaster. The whole northwest of Hedenstrom lay devastated. The bronze in the statue of the King—his birthday present—was melted down. Frankfort's troops came nearer, nearer, still nearer to Wesa. On the 28th they laid siege to it; on the 29th they captured the West gate; on the morning of the 30th they entered and took possession of the city. On September 1st, Hedenstrom officially surrendered.

The terms of peace proved appalling. The west province of Heitzen was ceded to Frankfort. The revenues from the Storz tax since its inauguration in 1831, with compound interest, were to be returned to Frankfort within twenty years. A judgment of twelve million florins, to be paid before 1896, was levied upon Hedenstrom; it was required to import not less than two million florins' worth of goods from Frankfort every year—the price of the

goods involving a tax; it was not permitted to export merchandise that conflicted with Frankfort's market to Frankfort, Prussia, Sweden, Austria and Bavaria. And the river Storz was to remain, in perpetuity, a free means of transportation to Frankfort.

The conditions of the people were appalling, too. Sons, husbands and brothers had been killed or maimed to the extent of half the nation's manhood. In the cities people starved and sickened, buildings lay ruined by bombardment, houses stood despoiled; in the country, crops were either spoilt or neglected, cattle and poultry exhausted or stolen or dead; factories had been fired upon, telegraph lines disrupted, tracks derailed, orchards blighted. Hedenstrom, at peace and quietly flourishing since the Napoleonic wars, was disemboweled and deracinated. Life in the mass could just barely go on; individually, it died of a hundred ills. Except for a few bankers and manufacturers who had prospered at the expense of the nation, the whole country was penniless, homeless and crippled.

As soon as the people could lift their heads, and the demagogues gather their audiences, and neighbors draw together, there went up an infuriated cry against the King. Too healthy quite for despair, the people were crushed to the point of maniacal venom; and there was yelling and cursing, night after night, in the palace square at Wesa. No figurehead, the people swore, had advocated battle and sent forth men to die and said "We will fight on," when every one saw it was useless. Had they won, he would have covered himself with glory; now they had lost, and he must face their wrath.

Caeliff took quick action to prevent mass movements from forming round the palace. The last remnants of disciplined, obedient troops guarded it menacingly. The King never left it. He sat, almost without sensation, scanning hour after hour the campaigns he had so often devised, going over the movements of his own troops and of the enemy's, and at length, with a tired motion, throwing them into the fire. At night he drank quantities of

brandy and stood in a dark room by the window, looking out upon the swarming square.

But the people had no food, they found no work; and daily they grew more vindictive and aroused. Caeliff, fearing that once the troops shot down mobbers in cold blood, the city would go mad, called the Houses of the Parliament into extraordinary session to settle, before even the problems of the nation's suffering were settled, the fate of the King.

"There is only one thing to be done," he said. "The King's life isn't safe until even tomorrow. He, too, is suffering, no doubt; but this is a time for nothing except prompt, decisive action. I hope you will agree with me, gentlemen, that both for his own welfare and for the welfare of the State, His Majesty must abdicate."

Every one had thought much the same thing; but the spoken word excited the Houses, met together, into an uproar. Many of the nobles protested. "Let him go away until the crisis is over," they said. The commoners shouted angrily their dissent.

"I am afraid he must abdicate," said Caeliff firmly. "He has ruined Hedenstrom for a generation, and not before then will he be forgiven."

The protests grew fewer; the lords, though troubled, became resigned. By a vote of 661 to 7 in the two houses, the King's abdication was "commanded." A few of Rudolph's cousins risked their lives in a last meaningless gesture.

When the voting was over, and the nobles and commoners were in their seats, Caeliff rose.

"I am advising the King of our decision by immediate messenger. I have told him he must go late to-night and that I shall seek an audience with him in two hours' time. He will need persuasion."

4

Behind closed doors the two men faced each other. Caeliff stood and the King leaned forward in his chair, occasionally stroking his

mustache with the tip of a long thin finger. There was a silence which Edmund waited for the King to break, but which prevailed for a long time, until Rudolph, never taking his large, cold dark eyes off his listener, said with authority:

"I have received a communication signed by your hand, and I have only this to answer: Nothing can move me to do what you ask. No King of Hedenstrom has ever abdicated. No King of Hedenstrom ever thinks of abdicating. I must ask you to withdraw this . . . request; I must ask you to withdraw it at once."

"That letter, Your Majesty, expresses the will of the people. I am sorry. But the people are right, and Your Majesty must understand this. If you don't, you will only suffer."

Rudolph looked for a moment at Caeliff, who met his eyes impersonally. "I am the King of Hedenstrom," he said, and stopped. "You speak of *the people* wanting this. I have followed in the way of kings, loving my people, wanting to do my best for them. You have made them my enemy: for until you

came, they were loyal and loved me. And what you say I must understand, I do not understand, I will not understand. Their suffering is mine—is due perhaps to my . . . mistake. I will expiate my mistake, but not as you direct. My place is here. Be good enough to go now and, since you presume to be their spokesman, tell the people what I have said.”

Caeliff, his mind trying to grapple with a hundred matters, and who was off in a minute now to seek desperate loans of bankers from Berlin, looked at the King and reflected on his pronouncement for a long time without speaking. What could he say? It was not merely that to be moved by such dignity, and give in to it, would set back the clock three hundred years; it was a sense also of never being able to talk to the King as man to man; of formal, grandiose scenes between a not quite real monarch and a not quite real prime minister. And however pathetic, however outdated, however unreal a moment it might be, it was also a critical one.

“Your Majesty,” Edmund said as auctorially

as possible, "must understand that the people won't reconsider. They are at your gates. They are madmen, and madmen consider nothing. You must pack up and go to-night. Go while you can, and later, perhaps, the people will want you to return."

"I . . . will not, Herr Caeliff," Rudolph answered instantly.

Edmund put on his gloves. "You must. You absolutely must." He started to say more, but the King forestalled him.

"Good-by, sir," said Rudolph.

Edmund swore under his breath. He felt on the verge of violently losing his temper. Simultaneously, he wanted to laugh. With his own life at stake, the King still rode his high horse. Would he have to be booted out of the palace? He looked at Rudolph, and perceiving in a flash that the whole situation had become a personal matter, determined now to make his ultimatum felt—he, too, could be high-and-mighty; but the King had looked away.

Edmund hesitated, then walked abruptly out of the room.

5

But when Caeliff had gone, Rudolph seated thinking in his chair, Rudolph roused from thought by the din of voices raised in anger and excitement at the palace gates, felt in his heart nothing but an aching sense of failure. For perhaps the first time in his life he wished he were not a king. Then there rose up in him, as he sat motionless, a bitter and inhuman fury, a scorn and hatred and tense, passionate denunciation of all humankind, wolfish in its crude omnipotence. He could not see; or think; or with his hands feel the table that held them poised: a King, a King, a King, and here he was, ordered out of his country. There came a moment of complete frenzy. Howl on, he addressed those outside the gates: I will stay. I will stay, and you will do nothing to me; I will order you to be shot down and cast into prison. I will deal with Caeliff as the kings

of Hedenstrom have always dealt with those who offended them. . . .

He stretched out, spent and numb. His mad frenzy had given way to anguish, and the tears rolled down his face. The mob yelled, and there was nothing he could do. All he would offer would not be received; all he would order against them would not be obeyed. They would break down the doors of the palace, swarm its corridors and come upon him here. Methodically he dried his face with his handkerchief, and as he consciously replaced it in his pocket, he knew there was nothing now to do but go. With an unremarked agility he jumped out of his chair, and crossing to the door, pulled it open wide, his powerful hand a vise upon the knob.

Now his whole mind acted coolly and quickly. The only two servants he could trust were taken into his secret. He took a light late supper. He ordered his coach to be brought round to the back entrance of the palace at two o'clock. He went to the safe

and took out what bonds and securities were at his disposal, he packed his bags, he wandered through all the wings of the palace, upstairs and down, past the locked door of Carl's old room to the locked door of Dorothea's, which he unlocked, entered, and left quickly, only taking something from a drawer in a chest. He carried a decanter of brandy into his room and swathed it with heavy linens in his leather valise.

At two o'clock he passed through the gardens down to the gate. The coach came through the stable-yard and stopped. Nothing was said until Rudolph had climbed inside and the coach began to move.

"Drive across the palace square," said Rudolph suddenly. The coachman pretended not to hear. "Across the palace square," the King repeated.

"No, Your Majesty," said the coachman, and trotting his horses softly along the cobbles, whipped them, as they headed for the Altkoenig bridge, into furious speed.

Caeliff stood at his window in the dim, late moonlight, in his heart a strange emotion for the King who was riding away. Looking out, he did not see cottages and woods and fields, but a city square and an unlit palace dark as death. He did not see the world of the people he had fought for; only a world of immemorial pomp . . . the King's world, and only the King's.

And at this hour of night, after such a day as he had spent, little things could have great meaning. He had saved some one from death, but at the cost of giving up his home and all that he had possessed from birth. When a peasant is turned out of his cottage, he reflected, it is a homely misfortune which we look upon with protesting eyes. But because this was the King of Hedenstrom being turned out of a palace, one did not realize quickly that here, too, was something pitiful, the same berefting, the same frustration. And when one did, it

touched one for a moment like a half-heard, futile line of verse, and then, because reason demanded that it should, it ineffectually died away. One could be touched, but one could not be sorry; one man might suffer, but millions were better off.

He stood for a long time, drawing the solitude of a caped figure in a carriage nearer and nearer his own sudden sense of loneliness. At length he left the window, and on an impulse, crossed the hall and knocked softly upon a door.

"Are you awake?" he whispered, and went in.

CHAPTER TEN

THE THIRD WOMAN

I

THE house in Baden-Baden, close to the Lichtenthaler Allee, was an old and inconspicuous one of gray stone, with a reddish, pointed roof and pointed gables. Those who took the waters there can remember hearing that the exiled King of Hedenstrom lived in it with his two servants, and some of them can remember seeing the King, tall and stern, walking in its not too well-kept garden, or riding back and forth between his house and the Schwarzwald, or appearing at night in the casino, placing kronen with precision on the numeral 9. In the life of the day he became a figure of some importance.

Sometimes one saw him alone; but sometimes, particularly at the height of the season,

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one saw him in the company of people who addressed him as "Rudolph," and, since he had a horse but no carriage except an old unpainted coach, invited him to drive with them and have an ice at the little pavilion near the Schwarzwald. Between him and these people there seemed a curious, highborn and reminiscential tie, broken and resumed as they came and went. On one occasion when the King was driving with friends, the open carriage passed another containing a distinguished-looking man with a beard and a woman of colorful, faintly melancholy beauty. The woman smiled tentatively and the man raised his hat, the movement of which Rudolph followed intently without taking notice of the man.

There were stretches when the King was not to be seen; and there were rare occasions when he was seen in flushed, lively spirits coming and going, at night, between the saloon of the casino and the terrace where one sat at little tables drinking mineral waters or brandies.

Those who paid annual visits to Baden-Baden later saw new people in the old stone house, and still catching sight of the King at the casino or in the avenues, learned that he lived now in a smaller house with his cousin, Duke Stefan, a middle-aged and sickly man also in exile. And when they saw Rudolph in the company of others, as they saw him more and more, his friends addressed him as "Your Majesty" and took him driving in their up-to-date carriages. The King, in his slightly old-fashioned clothes, was beginning to look older now: his brown hair had turned quite gray, his once lean and fine-lined face was heavier, with small pinkish pouches, and eyes that seemed less coldly stern and a little rheumy. He walked with a slight limp, due probably to gout, a heavy-set though very tall man of perhaps fifty-seven or eight. But sometimes he was still alone, in the reading-room of a hotel, studying a foreign newspaper with another newspaper behind to conceal it, or drinking brandy on the terrace of the Casino while waiting for his friends.

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Then, one summer, the habitués who used to bow to him failed to meet him at any of the places where he had so long been accustomed to come. They heard that he had gone to Paris, and it appeared that there was a rumor, slightly scandalous, concerning him, and concerning an American woman, a widow, who had come to Baden for the waters.

2

Mrs. Gould had met the King when Herr and Frau Obermann took them both driving. She was just past forty, a full-breasted woman with a natural high color, clear, round, innocent-looking eyes, and a slightly fleshy chin. Her name had been Lohig, and her parents, German-born, had settled in Milwaukee. The fortune her father made there provided Della first with an education, then with a husband, and finally, on her parents' death, with a large income. When Thomas Gould died, this income increased, and Della, at thirty-eight, having moved into a higher level of society, ac-

quired all its inclinations. Every summer she went abroad, shopped in Paris, visited her cousins in Munich, and rested elegantly at Baden-Baden. Every summer she met some one who proposed marriage; and once, until she found he had left gambling debts behind him at half the casinos of Europe, she almost accepted a baron. It was during her fourth summer abroad that she met Rudolph.

The man she saw was almost what she had always thought a king must be: tall and bearded, with eyes that at times could be commanding, and a very great manner. He had, it was true, a little too much flesh, his face was a little too red, and his eyes, at other times, were a little inflamed. But at such times he could be particularly agreeable, his manner became warmer and more solicitous, and she was charmed.

For several weeks she would chat casually with the King when they met near the baths and at the casino; and then she took her courage in her hands and invited him to go driving. He refused with vague regret; then he

looked at her for a moment, looked—it seemed to her—with what in somebody else would seem like rudeness, and said: “But you must ask me again.” She looked at him and became confused; then regained her natural composure, though her heart was beating loudly, and said, well-pleased with herself, “I shall, Your Majesty.”

Two days later she said to him: “Would you care to drive with me at half-past four this afternoon?” The King smiled. “At five,” he said. “I should be very glad to go driving at five.” “At five, then,” she answered, vaguely annoyed with herself, yet subtly elated; and at five she came for him in her carriage.

The King looked uncommonly well-preserved that afternoon, and bore an air of withdrawn interest. From time to time, in the manner of one who is learning such things for the first time, he inquired about her life in America. She deprecated it; it was dull, it was—well, crude; it was a long way behind the life they all took for granted in Baden. And she had moved in what the Americans

themselves regarded as the first rank of society. Rudolph asked many questions but made not a single comment on Mrs. Gould's answers. When the drive was over, she said, at the last moment: "I hope you will drive with me soon again." And then, impetuously: "And my carriage is yours whenever you wish it."

"I should like to go driving with you again sometime," Rudolph answered. He turned toward the steps of his house. For a second Mrs. Gould sat without giving directions. Then in a bold voice she said: "Drive to the Countess Moholm's."

She shivered over her mistake; but the next time she saw the King, he was very pleasant, and when she asked him to go driving, he accepted. But when she reached his house, she received word that the King regretted he was indisposed.

The next time they met on the steps of the casino, she extended him no invitation; but just as she was turning away, she said, "Would you like to go to the concert this afternoon and drive out for an ice later?" and he accepted.

They went to several concerts and for several drives. The season grew slack; the season ended. But Mrs. Gould lingered in Baden, seeing the King a little oftener each week. One day he surprised her very much by asking if she would not care to see his house. He invited her for tea, and she came and looked at the rooms, furnished without distinction in the period of the day. She looked at the King, she thought of how the palace at Wesa must have looked, and she felt for him a deep and tender pity. He glanced at her, he appeared to have an intuition, and so that she did not know how he felt in saying it, said, "I am not rich, you see."

"I . . ." She stammered and blushed.

"You may see now how a king lives," he said. "In America I am sure they think otherwise of kings." She struggled to find the right words, but Rudolph had already begun to conduct her into his study, where there was tea, and he said something about going to Paris the next week.

"I am going to Paris next week, too. On Thursday," she added decisively.

The King did not say on what day he was going.

They went for a drive the next afternoon; on the next they went for a walk, and Della came again to the King's house.

In the midst of the conversation, he said to her: "Shall we meet in Paris?"

"Oh, I hope so," she answered. His eyes were upon her, and she looked into her teacup and picked it up and set it down again. She studied the shepherds and shepherdesses on the plate of nusskuchen, and began very softly to hum. Rudolph was standing behind her. He stooped down and lifted her face lightly toward him.

They crossed glances, and his steadied hers. He kissed her, and a little shiver went through her. She stirred slightly in her chair, and touched his beard.

"Two old folks . . ." she said, and laughed. He kissed her again, without answering.

Mrs. Gould took a house for the winter in Paris. After closing his place in Baden, Rudolph, accompanied by his manservant, followed Della to Paris less than a week after she had gone. He found her animated by an amazing energy. She had rearranged furniture and bought more; fixed up, with exacting detail, a suite of rooms for him; bought riding horses and opera seats; communicated with friends.

She showed Rudolph his rooms in the manner of one executing a surprise. "They are charming," he said. "But it would not be wise, my dear, for me to stay in this house. If we are to go into society, I must have a place of my own."

Della said nothing. He had not mentioned the fact to her before, and now she realized that she was expected to provide him with his own residence. She was not ungenerous, she was very fond of him: but the fact hurt her, and

she did not think that in Paris, of all places, such an arrangement was necessary. Beyond that, she had hoped that he would marry her.

At length she said: "Rudolph dear, must we do that? Can't we both live here and be accepted in society, too?"

"I should be accepted; but not you."

"Can't we both be accepted? I mean . . . there is a way; and when two people are fond of each other, and it is the simplest way, can't it . . . can't we . . . ?"

"I wish, my dear, that we could. But that way is closed; not for reasons you will think, but because some day I shall be recalled to Wesa. It is not a silly dream of mine, though sometimes it may seem so. I am their King, and I must be ready."

"I couldn't go back with you?"

"Not as my wife. I do not mean to be ungallant, but that must be understood."

Della accepted this; it was easy to accept, because the possibility was infinitesimal. "You can annul the marriage, then," she said.

"No," he answered gravely. "I cannot."

They went downstairs and sat talking in the smaller drawing-room. After a time he said, "You agree with me that I should have my own house—for the sake of social expediency?"

"My dear, you must do as you choose. If you wish to provide yourself with a house, and feel that you can, I don't want to hold you here."

The meaning of her words was unmistakable, and Rudolph's purse demurred violently. He himself would have the entrée in either house; but if he lived in Della's, and she did not have it, in time she might become dissatisfied with the whole arrangement, a situation to be rigorously avoided.

"I was thinking of you," he said. "I shall be only too glad to stay if you are willing to face the consequences of such an arrangement. I want to make you happy."

"You will make me happy by staying here."

"Very well, then," he answered.

At first they spent a great deal of time together. They went to the opera and the races,

they rode in the Bois, they drove out to Fontainebleau and Versailles where Rudolph, half bitterly and half proudly, spoke of episodes in which his ancestors had had their part, while Della, identifying herself with these vanished grandeurs, stood moved and speechless, doubting her own reality.

But as Rudolph had predicted, Della found herself excluded from that drowning society which, in the first years of the Third Republic, avoided the contamination of the bourgeoisie with militant arrogance. Only that part of her money which outfitted and adorned the King counted for anything. He had come into palmy days again. He could go into the houses of the Faubourg and eat their ancestral sauces, drink their incomparable wines, he could share their plots and their gossip and become a party to their aristocratic self-pities, and see faces grown old that he had known when he was young. For here he moved, an exile in a foreign land, as the Duc de Guise in another land. And Della in her box at the opera, with Mr. and Mrs. Hewlett of Milwaukee, had to sit ten

feet away from Rudolph, a guest in the box of the Duchesse d'Alençon, and not recognize him by a word or a gesture.

She bore it patiently for a time, while, foreseeing the outcome of their present scheme of life, he half-promised, in spite of his earlier warning, to attempt her entrance into the houses he visited. But after one very indirect and veiled effort, he realized this was not possible; and when she asked him about the matter, he told her the truth. She got a little excited, but she calmed down and asked him, sarcastically, would he not consent to spend more time with her and her friends. He disliked her tone, and said he could see no necessity for giving up his own friends in favor of hers.

If she had dared, she would have stopped his credit at the bank; but she did not dare and he continued to lead his own life. He began to drink more than was good for him, not only the brandy to which he was accustomed, but whisky as well; and to lose a great deal of money at cards.

He became demanding, for though she had always realized it was not in him to accept her gifts as anything but his due, he had always acted with enough delicacy to acknowledge them as gifts; but now he seemed to feel that her money was his, and that there should be no question of how much of it he spent or where he spent it. Her American training resented these things, and had she not idealized his rank, and been fond of him, and in secret shared with him those glories she was actually not allowed even to glimpse, she might not have borne them.

But the sight of him flushed with drinking, the sight of him imperturbably avoiding her, both of which were becoming more frequent, taxed her patience and strange, snobbish fondness for him almost to the limit; and it was only an ingrown hopefulness that to-morrow he would be gravely kind again, or a duchess would invite her to a party, which kept her from provoking a scene and exploding.

Then she heard and verified a rumor that he was unfaithful to her and the lover of an

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opera singer; and that was the end. She cried to herself, she stormed in her room, she sighed for what was not to be; but some vestige of her American independence could not be pacified, her practicality could not accept so utterly bad a bargain, and she told him she would stand no more of his selfishness, his haughtiness and his dishonesty, but was closing her house at once and returning to America.

Perhaps even then she would have turned a touching apology on Rudolph's part into forgiveness. But he merely heard her through, like a wise, elderly adviser listening to some one complaining of some one else, and when she had finished and was struggling for breath, replied, "Very well, Della. I daresay you are right."

This infuriated her. "You can keep what's left in the bank," she said in a temper. "It will buy flowers, at least, for your chorus queen."

Rudolph bowed with the air of one who says, "You may go now," and turning his back, went without speaking through the door. Della

tried to call after him, but her words were garbled and indistinct. On her way next morning to the Gare de l'Ouest, she stopped his credit at the bank.

4

For a little longer the King maintained his friendships in the Faubourg, but as time went on he found it increasingly hard to cut the figure that was demanded of him. He was really a poor man. He had never, for a King, been rich; and between what he had sacrificed of his fortune in the war with Frankfort, and what he had carelessly spent in the first years of his exile—modestly on the whole though he had lived—nothing at all substantial remained. The State of Hedenstrom had confiscated the palace and the summer estate at Durendorff, and gradually he had sold off the small parcels of land which were the only other possessions of the Holnesburgers. Now the income from less than a hundred thousand francs' worth of securities was all he had; and it was not an

income, it was hardly spending money. So the securities, like the lands, began to go.

He did not regret not marrying Della. He had found her a common, preposterous American with whom for any length of time it would have proved impossible to live; but driven into such desperate straits, he regretted that years ago, when he was a figure in the life of Baden-Baden, and still young and handsome, he had not made a satisfactory alliance. But then he had waited from day to day for a summons back to the throne.

Doubtless the people of his own world whom he had mingled with again, actuated by a strong class loyalty, would help him if he could break the barrier of pride: but he could not. And it hardly mattered any more. He could not be happy and he could not be free, he could never have again what he had lost. Out of its ruins Hedenstrom had risen a new, undesirable world, in which all the fine elements of its past were missing. Far from remembering him with hatred, Hedenstrom had done him the crowning indignity of forgetting him.

Every one had forgotten him. The charwoman who tidied up his three large, bare, gray rooms curtsied, and was silent out of wonderment, but it seemed to him that even she doubted who he was, and looked upon him as an impostor.

He took his way alone down the Champs-Élysées of a morning, in his still good clothes that fitted him now too tight, and he was almost tempted to sit down on one of the benches, like an old retired tobacconist or confectioner, and rest. He took his lunch at one of the great restaurants, where he had his regular table and his regular waiter, and where a few people still turned to look at him and comment on the vicissitudes of Time. In the afternoon, on rare occasions, he went to the races, or to tea at the house of some older resident of the Faubourg, where half a dozen people in their sixties and seventies would talk indifferently of indifferent things. At night he did not often go out. He sat by a table reading Saint-Simon or Creevy's Journal until, as the evening advanced, he began to drink whisky. As he

drank, the whisky began to release him and only the very bottom of his heart bore an ache to remind him that all this other elation was phantasmal and of the poignant nature of reminiscence. And he grew stout and red-faced and shaky-limbed, and made use of a cane and of thick glasses; and in the winter he feared going out because he might slip on the ice.

One day a man came to see him from a publisher, and asked whether he would write his memoirs.

Rudolph set to work methodically. He began by working alone, but the writing tired him, and he presently engaged an amanuensis. The young man came every morning at ten o'clock and stayed until noon, and Rudolph seated by the window in a high-backed chair dictated, sometimes in German and sometimes in French, while the secretary later turned it all into French. One day there was an outburst on the part of the King. He detected that the young man was not translating but rewriting him. "I was not requested to find a

collaborator," said Rudolph, "and if I had been, I should have sought the advice of the Academy rather than single you out. You need not finish the morning, and you need not come to-morrow."

The memoirs were published in March, 1883, under the title *Jours Oublis*. They had a fairish early sale, but by the summer had been forgotten, except as they stared at one from the booksellers' tables. The reviews were brief. "It was to be expected," said one, "that the King would write from a single point of view and not without a certain inescapable bitterness. This we could have tolerated. But it was less to be expected that His Majesty would so uncompromisingly omit from his memoirs an account of the most interesting phases of his life. At the risk of bad taste it is our duty to point out to the reader that there is no reference, throughout the entire book, to Madame Caeliff, that there is no reference to the former Prince Carl, and that there is no reference to the events preceding and constituting the King's abdication. One would think that the

King had quite banished these subjects from his mind except for his frequent and venomous references to Edmund Caeliff. What the book does succeed in doing, in spite of much stilted phraseology and needless comment, is to give us a representative and occasionally vivid picture of the court of Hedenstrom in the last days of Alexander VII and in the earlier days of the author's reign.

"One would like to know how His Majesty succeeded in pacifying his publishers in the matter of his omissions; for it seems to us that by doing so he has converted his book from a furor into a fiasco."

The King had by no means pacified his publishers. They had written him many letters, and sent round a representative many times, to suggest as delicately as possible that certain periods of his life were ruinously ignored; but the King ignored the suggestions as completely as he ignored the past. Finally they wrote apologetically that his "relations with Madame de Bouvain and with Prince Carl, and the sub-

ject of his abdication" were of prime interest to the reading public, and definitely requested that they be included as part of the book. "I am including in my book," Rudolph replied, "all that I have to say to the world." This silenced his publishers, who were specialists in temperament, and with not very good grace they published the book as it stood.

Jours Oublis neither advanced Rudolph's fortune nor reëstablished his position; and perhaps only three or four of its readers went through it with any livelier feelings than a snobbish interest. It was not even translated into German and published in Hedenstrom. But Claire read it and recorded in her diary that "it has left me saddened at the thought of how life must struggle with its few defenses toward the illusion of self-mastery. And it has let me know how sadly little one can know of any one. What I remember now of R. is a fine nature lost in a medieval mind; a great and self-sacrificing devotion which I myself, in the necessity for making a choice, turned to bitter-

ness. I am glad, I think, that he has left me out of his book, and left out so much else that I am familiar with. It is not an answer to his misfortunes, but it is the best and most significant answer that he could have made. As for his attacks on Edmund, they were to be expected and, considering everything, partly sympathized with."

Edmund has left no record of his reactions. But Carl, now middle-aged, unhappily married and unsuccessfully writing, said one thing of the book: "My father and I shall never be able to forget each other. We have helped to ruin each other's lives."

And Della Gould, struggling through the French, was exasperated to find that she was not only omitted from mention, but that the critics had not even noticed the omission. "When I came from Baden-Baden to Paris," Rudolph wrote, "I lived in a house near the Parc Monceau. But I did not like so large a house, and I removed to the apartments I am occupying at present. . . ."

Matters were very bad. The King's health was poor, and he was forbidden to drink more than a glass of brandy after dinner at night. His finances were in a deplorable state: he was digging more and more into his principal, and though he lived simply, and went scarcely anywhere, the money seemed to run slowly through his fingers. He had written letters to his publishers, asking for money, but they had replied that he had already received more than he had earned. Three years passed, hardly animate years for him, who had an attendant now and was always laid up with colds or rheumatism or gout. With his old friends of the Faubourg he had completely broken: some were dead, and some were semi-invalids like himself, but all were people he did not care to see, from whose pity he would have shuddered as much as from their contempt. He hardly believed that he was so gross, so pot-bellied, so flabby-jowled and coarsely red

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of face as his mirror showed. He was shut up in his few rooms something like a leper; and when he thought of what he had been, he loathed himself as a leper, and spent whole days of secret shame. He had loved physical beauty almost as though it were the expression of a supremely modeled spirit; and he could not forgive its deterioration into a bloated mass of flesh.

Slowly he settled into a torpor which blotted out all reality: he slept fitfully all day and all night, and read old letters, and described to his attendant in the minutest detail rooms and passages in the palace; told of his dinner-parties and his receptions; spoke of Julius II and Francis V and Alexander V and Carl II and Rudolph III; and let gently slip from under him his withered years, his makeshift surroundings, his inward-driven angers. His attendant was taught all the ceremony of palace etiquette and became, half-fascinated, a lackey.

After that, the King began to revive in health and spirits, ate with relish, and got up from the bed in which he had languished. In time

he went down to the street and took walks to the nearest square. In the desert of old age he had found an oasis of oblivion, when the mind is found to be unimportant, the ebbing senses revive, a waylaid strength is recovered and worn again. The King rose from breakfast to think of lunch, and from lunch to think of dinner. He would become totally absorbed in a pipe, or in a game of cards with his attendant, or in the talk of children in the square. His energy was unpolluted, undirected toward any end. He never asked himself how long such a life might last, how near he was to destitution: he never asked himself anything.

"Jacques," he said once to his attendant, "I'm going to live a long time yet. When I'm very old, I shall die of overeating."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FOURTH WOMAN

I

COUNT VON ELMS and his wife lived to a great age together, but in his eighty-third year the Count died, somewhat straitened in circumstances by having made investments concerning which he did not understand. He had made Katrine very happy; she had never regretted their lack of children or her giving up the life of a royal princess. But at the age of seventy-six she was left alone, with no one to provide for her. The people she had come to share her life with were dead now or very old. She herself, always a lively and vivacious woman, was tired, and took the news that she was not very well off with indifference; for she felt that she would go long before her capital.

But when one is old, particularly when one

who has been bred a princess is old, the heart never quite breaks. One goes on from day to day; now and then one wakes up from grief to find that the fire has gone out on the hearth, that the meat is underdone, that one would like a window closed. The instinct to be comfortable asserts itself. Katrine had been a kind mistress to six servants; she was a querulous and unreasonable one to two. One spring day, six months after her husband's death, she ordered her old chambermaid to fetch her carriage. "But there is no horse and carriage, Your Highness." "There is, there is," the old lady insisted. "No, ma'am," said the worn-out servant bluntly, while Katrine fumed and stormed. She seemed an outrageous old woman; but the next minute, when she fell back in her chair, she did not seem outrageous at all.

There was no carriage; there was no longer, it seemed, a summerhouse in which to escape the warm weather; there were few of the things there once had been. With shocked eyes, grown suddenly keen again, the old lady

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looked about her at the plaster-cracked walls, the old servant in dirty clothes, the bad wine served in a clouded glass, the beef passed on a chipped platter. The house grew dusty and the bed-linen patched. In the midst of disorder and ill-wear, the gold and silver plate, the portraits in their sumptuous frames, the rich pieces of furniture seemed useless reminders of other days. She dreaded receiving her few old friends, and the time came when she was at home to no one, remained in bed, and wondered what might be done. To sell antiques and plate seemed disgraceful. But to go on living so shabbily seemed worse.

And lying there, more and more she thought of the spacious and lavish days of her girlhood. Sixty alienating years were blotted out. Her father and mother, who had meant little to her, lived again; her sister, buried long ago in English soil, was confiding her anticipation of living in England; her brother grew up before her eyes. He had always disliked her, but he was the only one left. Once or twice he had written, very stiffly, in exile; then ceased to

write at all; now they were both old, creatures apart, even the cord of consanguinity snapping, and she lay a widow in her little house.

He was hard up, she had heard recently, and something of an invalid; and she was hard up and tired and lonely. From him the suggestion that they spend their last years together would never come to her; but it was an idea which first crossed and soon haunted her mind. Perhaps, both living in the past, they could grow fond of one another in the selfish, *gemüthlich* way that the old, when they are not irritated, grow fond. At any rate she would put away any scruple of pride, or of bitterness over Rudolph's actions in the past, and write asking him to come and live with her in Dresden.

She wrote, on second thought, asking him to come for a visit; with great difficulty she found out where he lived, and posted her letter. Two weeks passed before his answer arrived.

“Dear Katrine,” he wrote, “you must forgive my scrawl, but I have just dis-

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charged my man and must write this letter myself. I was very much pained to hear that Ludwig is gone; had I but known I should long since have sent you my sincere condolences. I should like to see you again, I should like you to come and visit me in Paris, but I realize you are broken up, and tired, and that it would be better for me to come to you. I shall come in a week's time, hoping to make it less lonely for you.

“Ever your brother,
“RUDOLPH.”

She read the letter twice, slowly and carefully. “Ever my brother Rudolph, indeed!” she said to herself; and the letter gave her many emotions—expectancy; happiness; a sense of patronizing triumph; and pity, which held in its arms not only Rudolph, but herself as well.

2

Tacitly the visit lengthened into a permanent stay, and the sister and brother lived to-

gether in the Dresden house on terms of ill-humor. But the ill-humor went less deep than their imperative need of companionship at any price, and on Rudolph's part, of a home. Katrine's letter had saved him from the necessity of writing a similar one to her; for in his new, childlike gayety he had gone almost every day for several weeks to the races, and almost every time, he had lost. Jacques had had to go, and Rudolph, faced by hopeless straits, had lost his comfortable happiness and dejectedly wondered what to do. There was certainly not enough money to live on.

There was just enough, however, together with Katrine's income, to maintain the two of them in the house which she owned. He had gradually, with increasing stiffness, confessed to a state of affairs which Katrine had perceived quite from the beginning. Once the confession was out, and their joint incomes, through Katrine's practical administration, were pooled, nothing was said of the matter again. It was now certain that they would both grow older and both die in the one house unless Rudolph

should so displease his sister that, in a temper, she would turn him out. And they settled down, becoming more and more irritated with each other, more and more suspicious and crotchety, more and more obsessed by each other's shortcomings.

Rudolph had lost weight and was in pretty good health. He went out, never accompanied by Katrine, on explorative walks of the city; he interested himself in her garden, where he worked very seriously, and provoked the two servants by calling for them to execute his commands. Spurred on by his previous authorship, he sat occasionally in the evening sipping brandy and scrawling a few sentences of a work to be entitled *The History of the Kings of Hedenstrom*. Later he and Katrine would play piquet, each of them near-sightedly trying to discover the other one cheating. Presently, not pleased with his cards or suffering from eye-strain, Rudolph would conclude laconically, "That will be all," rise, and say, "Good night, Katrine." Often she attempted to talk about their early life at the palace, but

it strangely did not seem a welcome topic to Rudolph, and his replies would be discouraging.

Almost no one came to see them, and they went almost nowhere. Their life was reduced to a routine of irritations and not very successful amusements. Katrine had a niece by marriage who called occasionally but never issued them any invitations, and whom Rudolph liked until he found out that she was a friend of the Caeliffs. Then he told Katrine that she must not be at home to her niece, a command she laughed off by urging her niece to come more often. If the niece was in the house, Rudolph went out walking, or kept to his rooms.

But once just the two of them met in the garden and the niece blocked his way and began talking. He answered her very coldly, but she took no notice of his coldness. She went on speaking, she amused him with her anecdotes, and proved quite a charming and respectful person. After she succeeded in making Rudolph talk himself, she said suddenly: "You mustn't hold my friendship with the

Caeliffs against me. Instead, you must forget all about them."

Rudolph flared up. They looked at each other for what seemed a long time, the cold eyes of the one meeting the unperturbed, softly humorous eyes of the other. Then the King motioned her to a small stone bench.

"Tell me about her," he said.

They sat down and she began talking. He asked many questions, which the niece answered. Her carriage waited in front of the house for over an hour until, with the briefest parting, she hurried away. But Rudolph sat on, turning over and over what she had said, trying to see Claire as she now must look; furiously chagrined that he had spoken, but less chagrined than relieved in mind.

3

In January of 1891, when Rudolph was in his seventy-fifth year and Katrine in her eightieth, just as he was starting off for a walk, he slipped on the pavement outside the house and

hurt his head. The doctors did not find the accident serious, and in a couple of days Rudolph appeared to be quite himself again and came down and sat in the sunlight of the garden. The routine of his four years with Katrine was resumed as it had been.

But one day three weeks later one of the servants found Rudolph walking laboriously up and down the garden path as rapidly as he could, muttering to himself. She approached to say that lunch was ready, and he waved her away. She was undeterred, however, and coming closer, opened her mouth to speak.

"Tell Count Dube I will not see him," the King said, addressing her.

The servant, an old woman, looked back at him.

"What say, Your Majesty?"

"I say, tell Count Dube I will not see him to-day."

She stooped to pick a twig off the walk.

"Yes, Your Majesty." She looked up and smiled, not without superiority. "He . . .

he does not expect to see you. It is time for lunch."

The King was hungry and went into the house. At lunch Katrine, who was growing rather deaf, prattled on without noticing that Rudolph was whispering to himself and from time to time staring at the door. Midway through his fruit and cheese, he dropped his cheese-knife nervously to the floor, and motioned the servant to pull back his chair.

Katrine, straining her ears for his reply, asked where he was going.

"To the study," he said. "I must give Count Dube an audience."

"Who?"

"Count T-Dube. He is arranging a ball for me."

Katrine did not quite understand. She turned to the servant, and the servant nodded just perceptibly.

The old lady chewed her slice of apple slowly. Rudolph fumbled at the sliding-doors of the dining-room and the servant came and opened them for him. He went out.

"I don't know what to do," whined Katrine imploringly, and in vexation and helplessness she started to cry.

"Tilde and I will watch after His Majesty," said the servant, peeling a fresh slice of apple for Katrine.

But the old lady was trying to stand up, her tears drying on her face.

"Don't get the doctor," she said almost harshly.

"Oh, no, Your Highness," said Emma.

Katrine went to the opened folding-doors and peered beyond.

"Don't get the doctor," she repeated as though for the first time. "His Majesty will soon be . . . all right again."

Not much more remains to be told. For eleven months the King, not ill, but increasingly enfeebled, and overwrought through trying to cope with all his mind summoned up, revisited the scene of other days. All its para-

phernalia were restored: palace and court and court-attendants, and from time to time those people who had been preserved intact in the dark chambers of his heart. Chronology and geography were fitted into a sliding groove and moved up and down at will. Now the King made ready for the ball of the Marquise de Roncefort; now he stood in the House of the People and the tears ran down his face while he received their homage; now, in their brightly painted barge, he and Dorothea rode on the river. And sometimes the King's voice was raised or lowered in anger.

At times Katrine felt so weak and ill that for days she was unconcerned about the King. Yet for the most part she was endowed with great and almost unnatural strength, and followed Rudolph about with curious excuses and inventions, while, with other curious excuses and inventions, Emma and Tilde followed after her. The house grew accustomed to a booming voice dying away into higher-pitched murmurings, and to the people who came and went as suddenly as the ghosts they were. Its

acquired ceremonial life depressed and darkened it, yet somehow lighted it up; and at moments all four of its old inhabitants believed in these splendors with an almost equal reality.

But when winter came again, the King had acquired a racking cough and become half-blind and so feeble from exhaustion that he had to be supported from room to room. He complained of the cold and had lost his appetite, and had constantly to be revived with glasses of brandy. Only his appointments gave him the strength to rise in the morning, and at last even those were not incentive enough. Indignant and inconsolable, he lay in bed, the whole household at his beck and call, and fell into dreams which were indistinguishable from wakefulness.

He contracted bronchitis and almost at once, pneumonia. The doctors came out of his room and told Katrine that he had perhaps one day, perhaps two, to live. His window-blinds were drawn, and the King lay mumbling feverishly words that no one could understand. Late at night he woke, turned to Tilde and asked for

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water; then, before it could be handed to him, fell back into a doze.

Early the next morning Katrine, the two doctors and the two servants stood around his bed. The chill winter light was allowed to illumine, with an austere silver-whiteness, the entire room. Rudolph was lying completely still. The clock was ticking loudly and he seemed to be listening to it. Presently he opened his eyes, then closed them, as if listening more intently to the sound of the clock. Suddenly, without help, he sat up in bed.

"Katrine," he said, looking directly at his sister, "I should like you, please, to tell me the name of that man, our cousin, whom we are to invite. . . ." He stopped in mid-air, and began again to listen for something. Abruptly, in a pleading voice, he cried out: "Wo bist du? Warum bist du so spät?"

Katrine bent down nimbly and took her brother's hand, not daring to say a word, to draw a single breath, so that in that final minute she was surely all things to him: a very old sister dimly-perceived, a young Dorothea

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dimly-remembered, a Claire conjured up understandably as a groping mind had never understood her before. For a few seconds the King lay quite still; then he twitched all the fingers of the hand his sister held, and wrenched them free. The doctor supported Katrine and led her to a chair.

Two hours later, at a quarter of eleven o'clock, the King died in his sleep.

Katrine insisted that Rudolph must be buried, as he would so urgently have wished, next to Dorothea in the medieval graveyard behind the Cathedral at Wesa. Her niece got quickly into communication with Edmund Caeliff who, after a hasty action in the House, replied by wire that the King's wishes were to be granted.

Four days later the cortège passed down the long Koenigstrasse to the graveyard where Holnesburgers and none but Holnesburgers had been buried for upwards of nine centuries. In the first carriage sat Katrine, with Emma

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beside her, her mind roused frequently from death to peer out upon the city she had not seen for so many years. In another carriage farther back sat a man who had not seen his father in over thirty years, who rode with his son, the face of whom startlingly resembled that of Rudolph in his youth. Carl's manner was wholly grave but inconspicuous; he would attend the requiem high mass in the Cathedral, but when the handfuls of earth were flung austere-ly over his father's coffin, he would not be present. And in a third carriage sat a woman and a man who, before they should leave Rudolph at rest forever, now reviewed the interacting relations of their three lives. The woman sat a little hunched, aware that she herself, suffering from the most unfathomable of maladies, had not very much longer to live. She meditated the scene. But driving to the Cathedral, she remembered another drive and knew that everything had been decided then. She could attempt no revaluations here.

"It's all gone from me," she said to the man beside her. "All those feelings I had once I

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can't remember now. It is simply an old friend I am seeing buried."

And along the streets were crowds of the old and young, their imagination touched by such ceremonial death and by the knowledge that henceforth, irrevocably, there could be no more kings in Wesa. There would be no more kings; but it was something, if one was old enough, to compact the scattered golden particles of the past; to witness the end of things.

The coffin was borne into the Cathedral, and then into the churchyard, where it was laid away. From the bell-tower above came monotonous, melancholy sounds which presently ceased; and their reverberations ceased not long after.

THE END

